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LETTERS

Letters

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Nation *Readers on the Iraq War*

*Our editorial statement that "*The Nation *will not support any candidate for national office who does not make a speedy end to the American war in Iraq a major issue in his or her campaign" received a record-breaking outpouring of mail. It was called noble, courageous, gutsy, brilliant and inspiring. Hooray and amen! Right on! Hear hear! Kudos! Thank you! were some of the comments. There were also the inevitable exceptions: Letters saying, Finally! What took you so long? Too little too late and calling us flip-floppers were mixed with those taking us to task for (a) endorsing John Kerry in the last election, (b) not endorsing Ralph Nader/Dennis Kucinich/Wesley Clark/the Green Party in the last election and (c) suggesting to Ralph Nader that he not run in the last election. But echoing the tone of the vast majority of the mail was the letter that began with fourteen Bravo!s across the top. Herewith, a sampling. —The Editors*

Kalispell, Mont.

■ Thank you for making the commitment to support no candidate who is not for an immediate end to the Iraq War and occupation. As always *The Nation* comes through, speaks the truth and does the right thing. With deep appreciation, SYLVIA CALLAWAY

Oradell, NJ

■ No message has inspired me more than *The Nation*'s November 28 cover. That message is for Americans—the poor, the working class, the voters, our brave soldiers, the courageous dissenters—and the Bill of Rights. It is being framed and hung in my law office, and I eagerly await the T-shirt (make mine blue, XXL).
EDWARD ZAMPINO

Pittsburgh

■ I have photocopied your cover statement and written "I agree" across it. I stuff them in envelopes kindly provided by the requests for donations I receive almost weekly from the Democratic National Committee, Friends of Hillary and other Democratic notables. This is my way of sending your message to the Democrats. I urge your readers to do the same.
GREG GODELS

Essex Junction, Vt.

■ We taped a note to the cover—"And neither will we vote for a candidate who does not"—ripped it off and sent it to Howard Dean (my former governor) at the DNC (430 Capitol St. S.E., Washington DC, 20003). How many covers might he receive if all your subscribers did the same? DAN AND KAREN MAXON

Lexington, Mass.

■ No! No! No! No! Your clarion call sounds inspiring and pure in spirit—but once again Democratic candidates will kill each other off and assure more years of Republican rule (Jeb Bush, anyone?). Which is more important, internecine fighting, or getting a Democratic President and Congress—who are more likely to withdraw from Iraq—and saving our society from meltdown? BERNARD MAZEL

University Park, Fla.

■ I agree that the Iraq War is unnecessary, counterproductive and a terrible drain on our country. However, we should recognize that the war is one result of our longstanding presence in the Middle East and is a direct result of our desire for a secure oil supply. We would be naïve to believe we have seen the last of the oil wars. If *The Nation* wants to create a world where our children can live in peace, it should support candidates who make our reduced dependence on imported oil their highest priority.
ROBERT GOLDSCHMIDT

Albuquerque

■ Is this the same magazine that spent nearly all of 2004 vilifying Ralph Nader and treating him like a traitor because he came forward and spoke some extremely uncomfortable truths, truths that you now—more than a year later—acknowledge as truths? Welcome back to the fight, *Nation*. Better late than never.
BARBARA BACON

San Francisco

■ Now that *The Nation* has taken a stand of absolute moral clarity against any candidate who is not antiwar, perhaps you can apologize to Ralph Nader and any voters who took a stand of moral clarity in the last presidential election. M. HELLER

Washington, DC

■ It is well past time for you to recognize Gen. Wesley Clark as a leader among all Americans—not to mention Democrats, liberals, progressives and independents—who has continually argued *against going to war in Iraq*. In 2002 General Clark appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee and stated that going to war against Iraq was a bad idea. Unfortunately, many now want us to "cut and run," a position Clark has never taken. As an expert in diplomatic and military matters, Clark recognizes our obligation to do more than that.
ELLEN A. GOLDSTEIN

Washington, DC

■ I'm glad to read that *The Nation*, as well as the nation, is realizing that it's time to support candidates who are opposed to the occupation of Iraq. The Green Party of the United States (www.gp.org), which holds nonviolence, grassroots democracy and personal/global responsibility among its ten key values, was against the occupation before it began and calls for the immediate withdrawal of troops from Iraq. Greens won about thirty-four seats in local elections this year, and we will be running candidates for many, much higher offices in 2006. BECKY WEBER
Editorial Board, Green Pages

Topanga, Calif.

■ Is *The Nation* on the verge of changing from a milquetoast Democratic Party fanzine back into the voice of progressive and radical politics it was in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? I was a devoted reader until the 2000 election, when *The Nation* turned its back on—or rather, turned its scorn upon—true progressives. I canceled my subscription.

Now you have given me reason to reconsider. Since there will surely be very few, if any, Democrats running for national office who meet your criterion, the editors must mean that they will support Green Party candidates, who represent the only party that includes in its platform a commitment to nonviolence, social justice, environmental wisdom and respect for diversity. If the editors are not just posturing to shame the Democrats into turning lip service into action, I will happily renew my subscription and thank you for using your influence to promote peace, justice and democratic (lowercase "d") values. DAVID SKAUGERUD

Kennesaw, Ga.

■ I was very happy to see your strong stance. I appreciate the patriotic work you continue to do for our country. Your magazine is strongly standing up and speaking the truth while others cower behind corporations. Keep up the good work! JEAN CRABBE

Gunnison, Colo.

■ I too believe the invasion of Iraq was wrongheaded and illegal. However, now that America has destabilized the country, destroyed its economy and encouraged lawlessness and ethnic strife, I think it would be criminal to leave—and it amazes me to hear *The Nation* suggest such a thing. Should the country act like the Bush Administration—take risks that won't cost you a thing and then dump everyone else in the shit when the situation turns bad?

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EDITORIALS

The War & the Elections

In fall 1967 Eugene McCarthy decided to force what he referred to as "a referendum on Vietnam" by launching an antiwar challenge to President Johnson. It was a courageous act. At the time polls suggested that while Americans were frustrated about the course of the war, their preferred solution was not the exit strategy McCarthy counseled but escalation. Democrats who oppose the current military engagement in Iraq face no such challenge. This fall's polls show a substantial majority of Americans believe the country should start bringing the troops home. And with the call by one of Congress's most decorated veterans, John Murtha, for establishing a withdrawal timeline, all but a handful of Congressional Democrats—and even some responsible Republicans—are beginning to talk about exit strategies. That does not mean, however, that everyone agrees about what must be done, or that an end to the war is in sight. But it does mean the Iraq debate has evolved from a contest over how to manage the US occupation into the question of whether the occupation should continue. That question will be a central—perhaps *the* central—issue of the 2006 Congressional elections.

In our November 28 cover editorial, "Democrats and the War," we took the stand that "*The Nation* will not support any candidate for national office who does not make a speedy end to the war in Iraq a major issue of his or her campaign." We urged voters to join us. In recent weeks, as more Democrats have spoken out against the war and for a timely exit, we have come to believe even more firmly that antiwar candidates, with the requisite credentials, can prevail next fall. The first step in that process is, of course, to encourage support for such candidates, as we are doing this week and as we will continue to do throughout 2006.

Among leading Democratic Representatives and strategists, there is a palpable unease about laying out a withdrawal timeline. The DC insiders fear that doing so might provoke a voter backlash, despite the evidence of the polls. It is encouraging that recent weeks have seen significant if incomplete movement in the House Democratic caucus toward embrace of an exit strategy, especially since minority leader Nancy Pelosi endorsed Murtha's plan.

But the same cannot be said for the Senate caucus, which continues to send dramatically mixed messages. A handful of members, like Russ Feingold, clearly support a timeline, but others, like Joe Lieberman, still back Bush's "stay the course" talk. And top Democrats, like minority leader Harry Reid and Hillary Clinton—who has attracted an antiwar primary challenge from former National Writers Union president Jonathan Tasini—continue to try to have it both ways, expressing ever-increasing impatience with Bush's approach but rejecting a firm exit strategy. Clearly, the Senate could use more Feingolds. But that shift will not occur simply by electing Democrats in the half-dozen contests where seats are open or where Republican incumbents are weak. The key is to elect the *right* Democrats, or to force the wrong Democrats to get right about Iraq. That prospect now seems increasingly viable in the states where the most competitive Senate races are playing out; in most of them there is at least one serious antiwar contender. The outcome of these challenges is as uncertain as McCarthy's was in December 1967. But the value of every serious antiwar candidacy, even those that merely put pres-

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sure on eventual nominees to clarify their stances, is beyond debate. While contests in the House are often hard to "nationalize," Senate races tend to focus on national and international issues, and as the 2006 competition gears up, they are attracting more antiwar contenders than at any time since the late 1960s and early '70s, when opponents of the Vietnam War made virtually every Senate contest a referendum on the war.

Take the case of Rhode Island. Matt Brown started out as the decided underdog in the contest for the Democratic nomination to take on vulnerable Republican Senator Lincoln Chafee. But Brown, the Rhode Island secretary of state, is pushing for a timetable to bring the troops home by the end of 2006, and like a number of other antiwar candidates he is forcing not just his primary opponents but his party—which has begun to see the Rhode Island contest as pivotal in the fight for control of the Senate—to get serious about getting out of Iraq. In the primary Brown faces former state attorney general Sheldon Whitehouse, a much more cautious contender. Whitehouse is backed by the state's two Democratic Congressmen and has a clear fundraising advantage, but Brown's got the issue. Since August, when Feingold became the first senator to urge a specific timetable for withdrawal, Brown has been calling on the Administration to bring the troops home in 2006—and the 36-year-old former community organizer hasn't backed off since. Whitehouse is feeling the heat and now says he's for a "flexible" withdrawal timeline. But Brown says, correctly, that anything less than a precise timeline plays into the hands of an Administration that seeks an open-ended commitment to military occupation.

Brown is not alone. In Pennsylvania college professor Chuck Pennacchio proposed an exit strategy in June, forcing primary front-runner Bob Casey Jr. to at least begin talking about the failure of the Administration to define its goals in Iraq. In Montana John Tester, a leading contender for the Democratic nod, announced in November, "The time has come to support our troops by laying out a plan to bring them home." In Minnesota, where Democratic Senator Mark Dayton, a war critic, is retiring, child-safety advocate Patty Wetterling, who has emerged as one of the strongest contenders for the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party nomination, announced her candidacy with a promise to make an exit strategy her top issue in 2006. "Next Thanksgiving I want us out of Iraq," she says. Like Brown, Wetterling has launched a petition to pressure the Administration for an exit strategy.

In Maryland the most prominent contenders in a multicandidate field to replace retiring Democratic Senator Paul Sarbanes are Representative Ben Cardin and former NAACP chair Kweisi Mfume. Both are war critics, but Mfume, whose campaign struggled initially to match Cardin's fundraising and organizational strength, has sought to distinguish himself as the antiwar candidate by criticizing Cardin for failing to support Representative Lynn Woolsey's May 2005 amendment calling for a withdrawal timeline. Mfume is now in a dead heat with Cardin.

In Ohio a leading backer of the Woolsey amendment, Representative Sherrod Brown, has entered the Senate primary race against Paul Hackett, the Iraq War veteran who was bluntly critical of Bush's handling of the war during a losing race this

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past summer for an open House seat. In his House race Hackett surprised many fans of his anti-Bush remarks by opposing a timeline for withdrawal, and he has since disturbed war critics by dismissing the Congressional push for a timeline as "absolutely ludicrous." There is no such ambiguity with Brown. He was an outspoken foe of the 2002 resolution authorizing Bush to use force in Iraq, and since the start of the war he has written House letters demanding answers from the Administration about the misuse of prewar intelligence, co-sponsored withdrawal resolutions and regularly read letters from antiwar constituents—particularly members of military families—into the Congressional Record.

Even some Democratic incumbents are feeling the heat. Since Lieberman has emerged as the Administration's loudest Democratic defender, he has taken criticism from grassroots Democrats and groups like Democracy for America. Lieberman is unlikely to face a substantial antiwar challenge in the Connecticut primary. But he could still face serious opposition: Former Senator Lowell Weicker, a liberal Republican turned Independent, is talking about mounting a "Bring the Troops Home" challenge come fall (see John Nichols, "Run, Lowell, Run," at www.thenation.com).

There will be plenty of twists and turns between now and November. But if Sherrod Brown wins in Ohio, where Republican Senator Mike DeWine is vulnerable, and Independent Representative Bernie Sanders wins Vermont's open seat, as now seems likely, two of the House's most articulate and savvy antiwar voices will be heard in the Senate. And if they are joined by others, like Minnesota's Wetterling, Montana's Tester or Rhode Island's Matt Brown, the Democratic leadership will get the message loud and clear: It's time to get out of Iraq.

New Orleans Blues

Three months ago, after chafing from criticism over his failure to even appear to respond to the suffering in New Orleans, George W. Bush finally made it to Jackson Square to deliver his promise that "this great city will rise again." Yet today the great city remains largely in darkness. Most citizens of New Orleans are outside its boundaries, many with no real prospect of returning. What's rising in New Orleans are divorce and suicide rates, toxic dumps, foreclosures and rage.

The rage was evident in early December just a half-dozen blocks from Jackson Square, in Congo Square, where African-Americans performed ancestral music in the early nineteenth century, heralding a new American culture. On a recent chilly Saturday, Congo Square was the meeting point for a crowd of about 500 demonstrators who gathered to march behind the Soul Rebels Brass Band to demand the return of New Orleanians to New Orleans.

By now it should be obvious that the drowning of the city was a man-made disaster. Multiple investigations, including those sponsored by the American Society of Civil Engineers and the National Science Foundation, conclude that the sea walls and levees were poorly designed, constructed and inspected. A not-too-subtle whispering campaign quickly suggested that the fault might lie with those gaudy New Orleanians who insist on rollicking below sea level, or with a state whose legacy of political shenanigans dates back to before "The Kingfish," Huey Long. The city and state have much to account for, including an evacuation plan that failed to protect their most vulnerable citizens. But the ongoing campaign against New Orleans obscures the simple truth that erecting barriers against floods is a federal responsibility. The Army Corps of Engineers failed its job. The Bush Administration now has the obligation to launch a massive effort to rebuild the city that the federal government destroyed.

Bush last visited the Gulf Coast on October 11. It shouldn't surprise anyone that the President, and many in Congress, would prefer to look the other way while New Orleans collapses. Over the past quarter-century, conservatives have waged their most effective war against "big government." This model was advanced by Ronald Reagan and endorsed by every President since. Now, when a federally coordinated solution is required, agencies from HUD to the EPA to FEMA are flummoxed. Bush faithfully followed the script by endorsing only limited solutions like the Gulf Opportunity Zone and Worker Recovery Accounts. In doing so, he advanced government as a stop-gap for what couldn't be handled by his private and faith-based "armies of compassion."

Stymied by this lack of leadership and by no national call for an ambitious regional rebuilding effort, Louisiana legislators, among them Democratic Representative William Jefferson and Republican Senator David Vitter, are now fretting aloud that demands for protection from the strongest hurricanes could actually work against the city's interests by raising hopes too high. That's pathetic. A half-day's drive through New Orleans—at least, through the 80 percent of it that still looks nearly exactly as it did three months ago—should reveal to anyone what happens when levees don't hold. You can start by reading the body count still scrawled in red marker on some homes. Yet there are those who dare to offer New Orleans protection on the cheap.

In October this magazine called for a coordinated "people's reconstruction" that would provide for a "democratically accountable, economically viable, socially just and environmentally sustainable plan for regional rebuilding." This effort must begin with the physical reclaiming of New Orleans—an ambitious, two-step process including a re-engineered levee system capable of withstanding a Category 5 hurricane and a fully funded restoration of the coast, using the Coast 2050 blueprint. A people's reconstruction would then address the multiple effects of urban poverty that opened like fresh wounds during those days immediately following the levee breaches. Long before Katrina entered the Gulf, far too many New Orleanians lived on dangerous streets, worked low-paying jobs in the service industry, were unable to insure their families and sent their children to bleak public schools long abandoned by the middle class. For these citizens, the desperation experienced in post-Katrina New Orleans is nothing new.

New Orleans could become the nation's classroom. A reinvigorated dialogue about urban America is newly possible—or at least it was three months ago, when images of suffering children on Louisiana bridges and highways played across the nation's TV screens. So far, the President has squandered this

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COMMENT

opportunity, just as he squandered the post-9/11 opportunity to realign the nation's energy policy. No wonder it's widely feared in New Orleans that the Katrina moment has passed.

If New Orleans is to reclaim its greatness, the scope of the solution must match the scope of the problem. Each inch of the 200 miles of levees that are supposed to keep the city dry is now suspect. The wetlands that buffer the region continue their relentless disappearing act. Bush's EPA has downplayed the effects of oil spills following the hurricane; there is no real plan to deal with the toxic refuse of the flood. The Administration does not acknowledge the science of global warming and the consequences of a warmer ocean. Many New Orleanians long to return to their homes, but it is an unsteady feeling to raise children and care for elderly parents in a city on the brink. Meanwhile, decisions about homes, neighborhoods, schools and jobs will be made in their absence and without their input.

It doesn't have to be this way. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the rhythms of Congo Square sprouted into jazz, which gave the world a soundtrack of improvisation and democracy. A hundred years later, another democratic revolution could begin in New Orleans—but its song is quickly playing out.

COMMENT

Gene McCarthy

Gene McCarthy was a pure original. No other senator had the combination of endowments Gene possessed: He was a philosopher, a skilled 6' 4" baseball and hockey player, a visionary statesman, a moralist, an eloquent orator and graceful poet with a mastery of English diction and a wit equal to Shaw's that had no match in the Senate.

He, of course, was a human being with his own trademark faults. At times he seemed to retire to his lair rather than engage in battles on the Senate floor or in committee. Sometimes his wit inflicted needless pain on those less well endowed in brain or tongue. Once when I expressed admiration for the courage of a Republican colleague, Gene snorted: "He has the kind of courage of a soldier who observes the battlefield from a hill and then rides down to shoot the enemy's wounded men."

When I was elected to the House of Representatives in 1956, Gene had already been there for eight years. He accepted me as one of his freshman wards. Soon I found myself invited to be a member of a small Friday luncheon group that included Stewart Udall, Frank Thompson, Lee Metcalf and Gene. Those lunches, which usually included a martini or two, gave me a splendid introduction both to practical Washington politics and to contemporary issues. As the youngest member of the group I had the most to learn, and no freshman could have had four better teachers.

Gene went on to organize a larger group of House liberals known as McCarthy's Marauders, which blossomed into the even larger House Democratic Study Group. Big, brilliant, witty McCarthy was a hero to the liberals in the House.

There is an incident in 1957 with which I will forever associate Gene. I announced in March of that year that I would be giving my maiden speech on a certain date. My theme was the failing farm program of Agriculture Secretary Ezra Taft Benson—a high official in the Mormon Church. A number of my Congressional colleagues were present to draw me out in a series of queries. One of these exchanges angered a Congressman Hill of Colorado, who defended Benson as "a man of God." To this, Gene observed that it would be difficult to continue the debate over agricultural issues if God were against us. This prompted Hill to rebuke him for ridiculing religion. I wish, he said, that the gentleman from Minnesota had seen a drama on TV that showed "some French girl" dying at the stake for holding fast to her faith in God. "Well," said Gene, "I did see that show, but I don't think Joan of Arc went to her death in defense of flexible farm price supports!" This prompted Congressman Tom Abernathy to say, "Mr. Speaker, if we're going to debate this farm issue from a theological perspective, I ask unanimous consent to speak for the Methodists."

Gene's most fundamental historical achievement came in 1968—a decade after he left the House for election to the Senate. Urged on by some of the Vietnam War opponents, he decided to run for the Democratic presidential nomination against President Lyndon Johnson. The significance of this courageous step was that it gave the growing number of Americans who opposed our disastrous enterprise in Vietnam an appealing standard-bearer who was aiming at the White House.

Gene's campaign, with its moral and philosophical overtones, reached a broad segment of the public. He ran exceedingly well in some of the early primaries—notably, New Hampshire and Wisconsin—which prompted President Johnson not to seek re-election despite his sweeping landslide victory over Senator Barry Goldwater only four years earlier.

The ancient Roman rhetorician Quintilian defined an orator as "a good man speaking well." I give you Gene McCarthy—a good man who thought, wrote, spoke and quipped well.

And Gene, when you enter the Pearly Gates of the mystery beyond, remember Kurt Vonnegut's reassuring promise in his current book, "There is no reason good can't triumph over evil, if only angels will get organized along the lines of the Mafia."

How about a heavenly battalion of McCarthy's Marauders—God willing, of course? GEORGE MCGOVERN

George McGovern was a US senator from South Dakota from 1962 to 1980 and the Democratic candidate for President in 1972.

The Ney Scandal Grows

Bob Ney won election to Congress in 1994, one of a bevy of Republican revolutionaries who promised to clean up Washington and reform the House of Representatives. The Ohio Congressman leapfrogged to power by raising cash for Tom DeLay's Retain Our Majority program. As chairman of the powerful House Administration Committee, which oversees everything from lawmaker mail to parking spaces, Ney became known as the Mayor of Capitol Hill. It's a fitting nickname for

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At this season of the Winter Solstice May Reason Prevail

**There are no gods,
no devils, no angels,
no heaven or hell.
There is only
our natural world.
Religion is but
myth and superstition
that hardens hearts
and enslaves minds.**

Join the educational Freedom From Religion Foundation, a national association of freethinkers (atheists, agnostics) with members in every state. The Foundation has been active since 1978 to promote the views of nontheists and to alert citizens to the critical need to preserve the constitutional separation between state and church.

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COMMENT

a man currently at the forefront of Washington's most toxic corruption contretemps—the money trail of *über*-lobbyist Jack Abramoff. The brazen manner in which Ney allegedly pulled strings for lobbyists in return for financial favors is powerfully emblematic of the pay-to-play politics honed to perfection by DeLay Inc. Today, Ney and DeLay are the clearest examples of a "revolution" gone terribly awry.

The scandal dates back to early 2000, when Ney's chief of staff, Neil Volz, got a call from an old Hill buddy, Michael Scanlon. Scanlon had recently left DeLay's press office to work for the well-connected Abramoff, who was trying to buy a gambling boat company in Florida named SunCruz Casinos. Scanlon asked Volz for help. Ney, an old friend of Abramoff's from their days as College Republicans, obliged by inserting a statement in the Congressional Record that pressured SunCruz's then-ownership to sell the company. It was the first of many favors Ney would perform on Scanlon's and Abramoff's behalf.

The SunCruz deal served as a precursor to richer fortunes for the lobbying duo, namely the $82 million in fees they demanded between 2001 and 2004 to lobby on gaming rights for a half-dozen Indian tribes. Much of that money, we know now, vanished in a tangled web of phony Christian front groups, bogus self-enriching charitable organizations and pricey Congressional junkets. In mid-November Scanlon pleaded guilty to one count of conspiring to bribe public officials and defraud Indian tribes. The plea alleges that Scanlon and Abramoff "engaged in a course of conduct through which one or both of them offered and provided a stream of things of value to public officials in exchange for a series of official acts." The provider of those ten "official acts" was a certain "Representative #1"—identified by lawyers as Ney—who received "travel, golf fees, frequent meals, entertainment, election support for candidates...and campaign contributions."

Ney is fighting the law on two fronts. He's already been subpoenaed and has reportedly received word of a possible indictment in the SunCruz case, which goes to trial January 9, with Abramoff and his mob-tied partner, Adam Kidan, facing federal conspiracy and wire-fraud charges. Kidan recently copped a deal and agreed to testify against Abramoff and Ney. And Ney could also face legal action in the massive Justice Department probe prompted by John McCain's high-profile Senate Indian Affairs Committee investigation of Abramoff. "Gratuity and bribery charges have two ends: donor and donee," says Stan Brand, a top Washington criminal defense attorney and former counsel to Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill. "I deduce from these facts that it's inevitable Ney will be charged."

The facts tell a damning story. Ney placed statements into the Congressional Record haranguing SunCruz—and then added another statement praising the company seven months later, in October 2000, after Abramoff had acquired SunCruz and days before he donated $10,000 on Ney's behalf to a GOP fundraising committee. Abramoff hosted a $1,000-a-head fundraiser for Ney in March 2001, and frequently comped Ney's meals at his Washington restaurant, Signatures. Ney inserted a provision into a bipartisan election-reform bill, granting another Abramoff client, the Tigua Indian Tribe of El Paso, Texas, gaming rights—the very rights Abramoff had fought against a year earlier as a lobbyist for the rival Louisiana Coushatta Tribe. "Just met with Ney!!!" Abramoff wrote in an e-mail to Scanlon in March 2002. "We're f'ing gold!!!! He's going to do Tigua." Six days later Abramoff instructed the Tiguas to donate $32,000 to three of Ney's political action committees.

By summer 2002 Ney had a loftier request. "Our friend," Abramoff wrote to the Tiguas, "asked if we could help (as in cover) a Scotland golf trip for him and some staff.... The trip will be quite expensive (we did this for another member—you know who), two years ago." That other member, of course, was DeLay. Ney's trip, which ran up a six-figure tab, included former Christian Coalition director Ralph Reed, currently running for lieutenant governor in Georgia, and David Safavian, the White House procurement official indicted in October for obstructing the Abramoff investigation. Ney personally thanked the Tiguas upon his return, even though he'd known for months that their gaming provision would not make the final election reform legislation. His claim that Abramoff "duped" him into accepting money from the Tiguas appears almost laughably implausible as the evidence mounts.

The Scanlon plea likely marked the beginning of the end for Ney, but only the start of the Abramoff aftershocks in Washington. When instances of corruption swirled around the House leadership in the past few years, Congressional watchdogs warned that the scandals reached "beyond DeLay." Now, as three dozen Justice Department officials pursue Abramoff's cash flow, that phrase applies equally to Ney. "I think this could be the biggest corruption scandal in one hundred years," Brand says. "By 2006 you're going to see anywhere from one to six individual sitting members and half a dozen or more staff people indicted. It's beyond Ney. He's the first of many."

ARI BERMAN

Ari Berman, a Nation *contributing writer, is a Puffin foundation Writing Fellow at The Nation Institute.*

CALVIN TRILLIN

PENTAGON SECRETLY PAID TO PLACE ARTICLES IN IRAQI NEWSPAPERS: ANOTHER LESSON IN DEMOCRACY

Democracy's the only way.
That's what we're giving US aid for.
It's great to have a press that's free,
But better if it's bought and paid for.

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COMMENT

Conrad Black's Fall

The myths about Conrad Black, Nicholas Coleridge noted in *Paper Tigers*, his wry survey of two dozen international newspaper tycoons, "all concern money and power: a family friend remembers blinking in disbelief as he watched, through the summer haze, an eight-year-old Conrad carefully washing dollar bills and hanging them out on a line to dry." Five decades later, Black's quest for money and power has brought him to the brink of ruin: According to a recent indictment prepared by Patrick Fitzgerald, the US Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois (and the man who indicted Lewis Libby), Black and several associates stole $52 million from Hollinger International, the publicly traded newspaper corporation Black controlled. The eleven-count indictment further alleges that Black abused corporate perks by billing Hollinger shareholders for a variety of lavish personal expenditures: a vacation in French Polynesia, renovations on a pricey Park Avenue apartment and a $62,000 birthday celebration for his wife, Barbara Amiel, at La Grenouille in New York City (where the wine and champagne bill came to $13,935). If found guilty, Black could face forty years in prison.

Black's current difficulties sprouted in late 2003, when he faced a shareholder revolt at Hollinger: A special committee of the board charged Black and several cronies with the illegal use of $32 million in company funds. In early 2004 Hollinger removed Black from the chairmanship and sued him and others for plundering the corporation. A beleaguered Black found himself at odds with his handpicked board of directors, which included Henry Kissinger, Richard Perle and former Illinois Governor James Thompson. On January 20, 2004, the board met by teleconference to ratify Black's removal and to approve the shareholders' lawsuit. Kissinger, who had known Black for two decades, could no longer remain neutral and voted yes to green-light the lawsuit against his friend. Richard Siklos recounts the episode in his fine biography *Shades of Black*: "'Henry, did you just vote against me?' 'Yesss,' Kissinger repeated into the phone. '*Et tu, Brute*,' replied Black." (After considerable pressure from shareholders and management, six members of the board—including Kissinger, Perle and Thompson—decided not to stand for re-election in January.)

An imperial air of conquest and intrigue has long been a vital element of Black's life. As a teenager, he devoured W.A. Swanberg's biography of William Randolph Hearst, *Citizen Hearst*. Later he was expelled from prep school for selling copies of final exams. In the late 1960s Black began to acquire obscure newspapers in the Canadian provinces. By the time he was 50, he was the proprietor of one of the world's largest newspaper companies, which he used as a springboard for social climbing on a grand scale: In 2001 Black was inducted into the British House of Lords, and obtained the title of Lord Black of Crossharbour. Black's properties included the *Jerusalem Post* (which he pushed to the right by switching the paper's support from Labor to Likud), the *National Post* of Toronto (which he used as a battering ram against the Canadian healthcare system), the *Chicago Sun-Times* and several prestigious media properties in London, including the *Daily Telegraph* and *Spectator* magazine. Hollinger provided a $200,000 annual subsidy to the influential right-of-center quarterly *The National Interest*, and the company also invested in the *New York Sun*, a scrappy conservative daily. (Hollinger has since sold the *Jerusalem Post*, the *National Post* and the *Daily Telegraph*.)

By and large American newspaper publishers prefer the shadows to the light, and when they do emerge they hardly raise whirlwinds. (Consider Arthur Sulzberger Jr.'s dismal November 10 appearance on *Charlie Rose*, when he evaded questions about recent convulsions at the *New York Times*.) Black exhaled fire: Siklos likened Black's rhetorical invective to "verbal napalm." Here is Black on media baron Robert Maxwell: "An endomorphic, shameless gadfly, poseur, fugitive and confidence trickster...one of history's greatest swindlers, a crook of Dickensian and Zolaesque proportions." On Quebec separatist René Lévesque: a "repulsive little gnome...greasy, twitchy and specious." On journalists: "My experience with journalists authorizes me to record that a very large number of them are ignorant, lazy, opinionated, intellectually dishonest and inadequately supervised."

Black's self-image transcended that of raconteur: He fancied himself a serious intellectual, especially in matters of history, politics and diplomacy, and produced weighty tomes for the literary marketplace. In 2003 PublicAffairs published Black's 1,300-page biography, *Franklin Delano Roosevelt: Champion of Freedom*, which received some glowing reviews in the United States: *The Journal of American History* proclaimed it "the liveliest and most comprehensive popular biography of Roosevelt to date." (*Booklist* was less enthusiastic, deeming the work "frequently ponderous.") Even Black's powerful friends seemed to grow weary of his verbosity: After listening to a long recitation by Black on the armaments and tonnage of all the battleships in World War II, Margaret Thatcher reportedly declared, "I know, Conrad."

Throughout his long career, Black relished his connections with the mighty and powerful. In addition to his friendships with Kissinger, Perle and Thatcher, Black cavorted with the likes of Ronald Reagan, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Condoleezza Rice, William F. Buckley Jr., David Brinkley, George Will (who reportedly received $25,000 for a single day's toil for the Hollinger board) and Tom Wolfe. It was Wolfe who, in 2000, drafted a letter of recommendation supporting Black's quest for membership in Manhattan's exclusive Century Club. "Ladies and gentlemen," Wolfe wrote, "Conrad Black has done more for the lively, provocative, and sane discussion of the important social, political, and intellectual issues of our time than any newspaper publisher of the past decade. He is also a delightful, charming, congenial gentleman. He is not merely a GOOD candidate for the Century—we NEED him." Reading Patrick Fitzgerald's exhaustive sixty-page indictment, one gets the feeling that Conrad Black's final destination will not be an armchair in the Century Club but a bunk in a prison cell.

SCOTT SHERMAN

Scott Sherman is a Nation *contributing writer.*

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COMMENT

A Year of Sweet Victories

When we originally conceived "Sweet Victories" as a feature on our website, Bush had just been re-elected, and the progressive community was deeply deflated. The idea was to chronicle progressive triumphs—electoral victories, successful organizing efforts, protests and boycotts, the launching of new ideas, new organizations and initiatives. We hoped these stories would bring attention to what is too often off the mainstream media radar screen, and also maintain a sense of hope and inspiration in a dark time. A year later, much has changed: The attempt to destroy Social Security has been blocked, the movement for withdrawal from Iraq has growing public support and many local, statewide and national victories have been won. Here is a look back at some of the year's sweetest victories.

Electoral Reform

Portland, **Oregon**, became the first city in the country to approve full public financing of elections. **Connecticut** passed the strongest campaign finance reform bill in the United States, banning contributions from lobbyists and state contractors. In addition, the legislation created a publicly funded election system encompassing statewide races, including House and Senate seats.

Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Maine became the sixth and final New England state to outlaw discrimination against homosexuals in employment, housing, credit, public accommodations and education.

Residents of **Topeka**, **Kansas**, rejected Fred "God Hates Fags" Phelps's attempt to overturn an ordinance banning discrimination against gays in municipal hiring. And in the City Council primary, Phelps's granddaughter and fellow antigay activist, Jael Phelps, lost big to Topeka's first openly gay council member, Tiffany Muller.

Massachusetts General Hospital announced the creation of the Disparities Solution Center—the first institution specifically dedicated to bridging the racial gap in healthcare service.

Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack restored voting rights to thousands of Iowans, reversing an unjust state law that ordained lifetime disenfranchisement for anyone convicted of a felony. Of those affected by the disenfranchisement law, 25 percent were African-Americans. In March **Nebraska** also overturned its lifetime disenfranchisement law for convicted felons. Currently only four states—Alabama, Florida, Kentucky and Virginia—continue to uphold this absurdly punitive law.

Colorado became the seventh state to officially condemn the Patriot Act, joining **Alaska**, **Hawaii**, **Maine**, **Vermont**, **Idaho** and **Montana** (not to mention more than 375 local communities).

Environment and Health

California's Safe Cosmetics bill was signed into law. The first of its kind in America, the law requires manufacturers to disclose to the state Department of Health Services any product ingredients linked to cancer, mutations or birth defects.

Six new Democratic governors—Rod Blagojevich (**IL**), Jim Doyle (**WI**), Christine Gregoire (**WA**), Ted Kulongoski (**OR**), Janet Napolitano (**AZ**) and Brian Schweitzer (**MT**)—joined an earlier three—Jennifer Granholm (**MI**), Ed Rendell (**PA**) and Bill Richardson (**NM**)—in embracing the Apollo Alliance's goal of achieving sustainable US energy independence within a decade.

Colorado passed the Renewable Energy Initiative, a precedent-setting victory for renewable energy; it requires the state's largest electric companies to increase their use of sources such as wind, solar, biomass and geothermal from less than 2 percent today to 10 percent by 2015. Amendment 37 is expected to save Coloradans $236 million by 2025, create 2,000 jobs and significantly reduce gas prices in the state.

New York City agreed to issue taxi medallions to hybrid cars, the latest in a string of victories for the "Green Fleets" movement. Earlier, legislators in **Charlotte**, **North Carolina**; **Denver**; **Seattle**; and **Madison**, **Wisconsin**, had also made strides in converting their fleets to green.

Labor and Economic Rights

Vermont, **New Jersey**, **Hawaii**, **Connecticut**, **Minnesota** and **Wisconsin** raised their state minimum wage. In **California** an Alameda County superior court judge ordered the giant uniform manufacturer Cintas Corporation to pay 219 workers nearly $1 million in back wages. Paul Sonn of NYU's Brennan Center for Justice called it "the first large-scale enforcement effort involving a large group of workers in a class action."

Students at Georgetown University in **Washington**, **DC**, and Washington University in **St. Louis** staged protests and convinced administrators to provide a living wage for university employees. After the Coalition of Immokalee Workers organized a three-year boycott of Taco Bell, Yum! Brands, one of the world's largest fast-food corporations and the chain's parent company, agreed to improve working conditions for its tomato pickers in **Florida** and to pay an extra penny per pound of tomatoes picked.

Maryland passed the Fair Share Health Care Act, requiring Wal-Mart and other large companies to provide health benefits for employees (although the act was vetoed by the governor, an override seems likely). Throughout the year, Wal-Mart Watch and Wake Up Wal-Mart waged a tireless campaign to reform Wal-Mart, forcing the retail behemoth into PR crisis mode.

Antiwar Movement

Chicago's City Council voted 29 to 9 to become the largest US city to pass the Bring Them Home Now resolution. The city joins **Philadelphia**, **San Francisco**, **Sacramento** and more than fifty other municipalities that have called for withdrawal.

The **United Methodist Church** and the **Union for Reform Judaism** passed resolutions calling for withdrawal.

As we celebrate these victories and the efforts of so many people behind them, we realize that this is no time to pause. Much important work remains to be done and many critical battles loom. Starting with this issue, "Sweet Victories" will appear as a regular feature in the magazine, as well as on the *Nation* website. If you have a sweet victory you'd like to share, please send it to nationvictories@gmail.com.

Katrina vanden Heuvel and Sam Graham-Felsen

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COMIX NATION

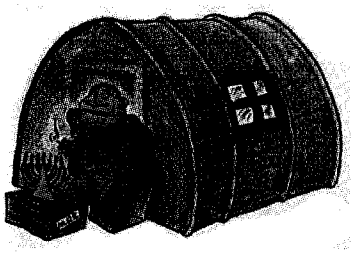
HAPPY HOLIDAYS

From a Gitmo detainee to his captors

I bear confinement as I can,
The halal meals, the free Koran.
The rock 'n' roll, the Harry Potter,
They almost made my reason totter.
But now this place is living hell—
A light-up Santa by my cell!
Come quickly! If you make it go,
I'll tell you what you want to know.

New Year's card from George Bush to Arlen Specter

In this New Year it would be neat-o
If you 'd vote to confirm Alito
For if you get all attitude-y
I'll have to nominate Judge Judy.



From a former resident of New Orleans to friends and family

Kwanzaa in a Quonset hut
Was not what I had planned.
I'd rather be in my own home
But I'm in FEMA's hands.

Christmas card from George Bush to the Democratic Senate leaders

Peace and joy this festive season!
Could I but charge you all with treason
'Twould make my day— alas for me,
You 've Senate floor immunity.

Daniel Abraham is a writer and artist living in New York.

Daniel Abraham

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ERIC ALTERMAN

Another 9/11? Never Mind...

The Bush Administration's reaction to the 9/11 attacks has been almost incomprehensibly weird. The nation was profoundly traumatized by the Al Qaeda assault. Our leaders promise us over and over that the next catastrophic attack is imminent. Yet not only do they do nothing to prepare for such an eventuality, they actively seek to sabotage those who do. Again and again the Bush Administration has slashed Congressionally mandated funding for precautionary measures in the areas of port security and nuclear and chemical security. They withdrew troops and intelligence agents from Afghanistan, where they were tracking Osama bin Laden and a reconstituted Al Qaeda, in order to throw them into Iraq, where no terrorist threat existed. Together with the Republican majority in Congress, they have treated "homeland security" as a pork distribution program. What money is appropriated receives little or no oversight. Columbus, Ohio, is free to spend homeland security funds on bulletproof vests for fire department dogs; Newark, New Jersey, on air-conditioned garbage trucks; and the District of Columbia, on leather jackets and self-improvement seminars for sanitation workers.

What has been the reaction of the political and journalistic establishment to the Administration's criminal dereliction of duty? This too is a puzzle. Some institutions have, indeed, attempted to hold our leaders responsible. The Brookings Institution and the Council on Foreign Relations, for example, have published studies delineating the inadequacies of the Bush Administration's approach—if it can be called that—to protecting America. And yet, almost congenitally, these institutions find themselves unable to make these issues matter politically. They are, after all, run by and for insiders who risk their precious "credibility" and personal connections to power should they bend the rules of political politeness.

By far the most vocal and valuable of these establishment voices has been the 9/11 commission. Typically, after failing to prevent its creation, the Administration initially sought to undermine its effectiveness. The dogged members of the commission produced an extremely useful 567-page report, nevertheless skirting questions that might have revealed too much. The report, to take just one example, fails to address why it fell to Dick Cheney to OK the shoot-down of civilian jets, if necessary, when he enjoyed absolutely no constitutional authority to do so. (Was Bush suffering a breakdown and deemed by the veep to be mentally incapacitated? Did Cheney even ask?)

Where the 9/11 commission has been perhaps most impressive, however, is in its members' insistence on sticking around long enough to insure that its recommendations are not forgotten or ignored. When its mandate expired with the issuance of the report, the commission obtained private funding to monitor and report on the Administration's implementation schedule.

Well, the follow-up report is in, and the news could hardly be worse. The Administration's record remains one of consistent, and apparently willful, failure. The commission gave Bush & Co. a grade of F for:

§ failing to provide "adequate radio spectrum for first responders" from a variety of agencies to coordinate their actions in emergencies;

§ allocating homeland security funding based on pork-barrel politics, not on risk;

§ failing to make critical improvements in airline passenger pre-screening;

§ refusing to declassify the intelligence budget, thereby precluding effective Congressional oversight of budget priorities;

§ failing to set international standards for the treatment of detainees suspected of terrorism.

The panel also gave the government two incompletes, twelve D's, twelve B's and nine C's, but the grading process seems awfully generous. For instance, the panel did not issue a failing grade for the Administration's efforts to "secure WMD," even though it invaded Iraq and found nothing. Nor did it give an F regarding the creation of a "Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board," despite the fact that "funding is insufficient, no meetings have been held, no staff named, no work plan outlined, no work begun, no office established."

Almost as amazing—and disturbing—has been the collective yawn with which the mainstream media greeted this shocking assessment. As *Editor & Publisher* discovered in a survey of forty major newspapers, only six thought the report worthy of front-page coverage. The *New York Times* buried the story in its back pages and then ignored it entirely in Sunday's news coverage. As veteran *Washington Post* reporter Tom Edsall admitted in an online chat, he was "surprised to see" that unlike the *Post*, the *Times* "played the story inside. Insofar as the press drives a story, that will diminish public reaction." Moreover, the report came on the heels of another report, in October, by the Government Accountability Office warning that "the US government lacks an integrated strategy to coordinate the delivery of counter-terrorism financing training and technical assistance to countries vulnerable to terrorist financing." Republican Senator Charles Grassley termed this "just inexplicable in light of the war on terrorism."

Try this, Senator. The Administration just does not care. As former White House aide John DiIulio once explained, "What you've got is everything, and I mean everything, being run by the political arm. It's the reign of the Mayberry Machiavellis." And politically, as GOP *über*-strategist Grover Norquist explains, this issue simply cannot hurt the Republicans no matter what. The public perception is that "Republicans are tough on crime to the point where they'll take away your civil liberties. Republicans are so tough on foreign policy that they'll flatten cities." Once the attack happens, Democrats do not get to say I told you so: They must rally 'round their President.

And so they leave us vulnerable, amazed and, if sensate, terrified. ■

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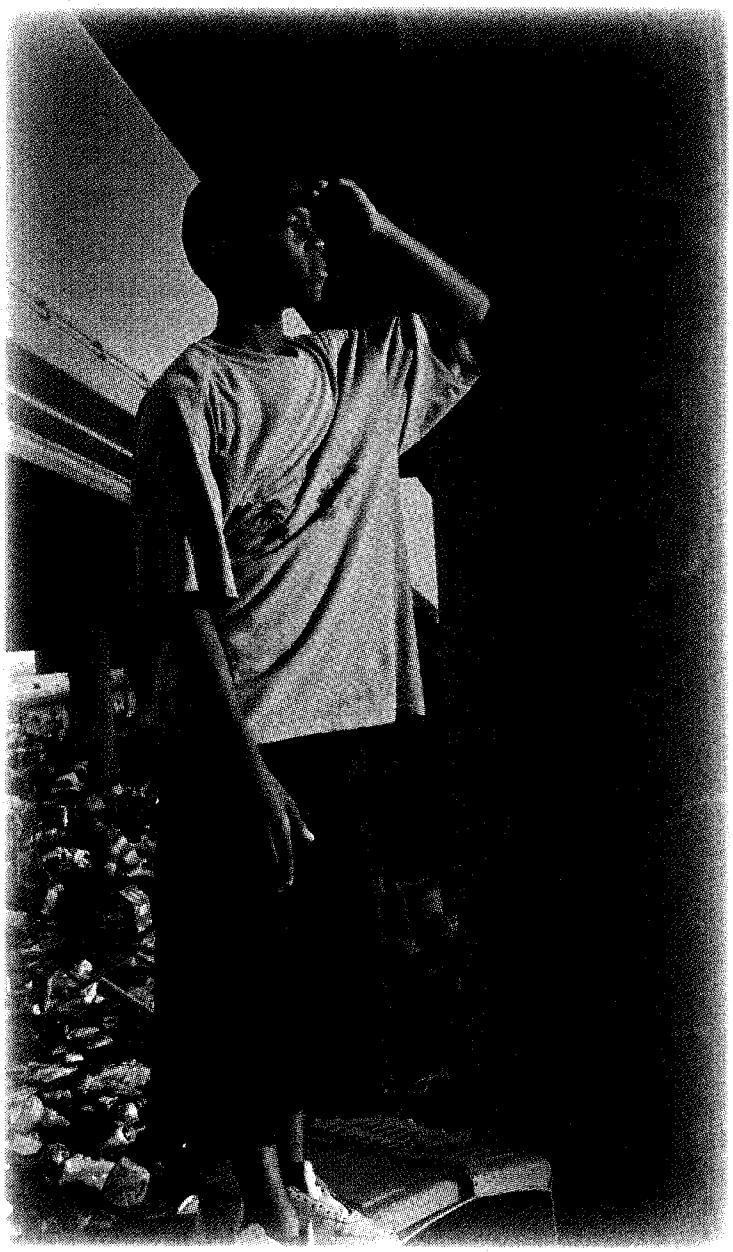
ARTICLES

IN THE SHADOW OF DISASTER

Rebuilding in Harm's Way by Ari Kelman



The flood was voracious; it swallowed whole neighborhoods, ending hundreds of lives. But the battered levees have been repaired. They again stand between New Orleans and catastrophe, holding the Mississippi and Lake Pontchartrain in check. The antique drainage system, too, is back online. Any water that falls in the city, every drop of rain or tear shed, ultimately flows through canals until it's pumped over the levee into the lake. This is how New Orleans has been engineered: to control stray water, to clarify the border between the city and its surroundings.

It has been a losing battle. And yet, though it sounds particularly odd following Hurricane Katrina, the city's efforts have been spurred by the notion that nature favors it. From New Orleans' founding near the mouth of the Mississippi in 1718, the city has banked on geography to sweep it to greatness. Long before technologies circumvented the vagaries of geography, boosters claimed the city would reign over a commercial empire. But the local environs rarely cooperated with imperial visions. The lake and river loom above the city. Much of New Orleans lies below sea level, atop a high water table; there's no natural drainage. And pestilence thrives in the steamy delta. Scholars call this the disjuncture between "site"—the actual real estate a city occupies—and "situation"—an urban area's relative advantages as compared with other places. New Orleans, with access to the river and the gulf, enjoys a near-perfect situation. But it has an equally horrid site.

Geographer Peirce Lewis sums it up: New Orleans is "impossible" yet "inevitable." He means that if a city's situation is good enough, people will improve its site—no matter the costs. New Orleanians historically have done this by segregating spaces: at first not socioeconomically or racially but environmentally. In New Orleans there are spaces for nature: outside the levees or within the canals leading from the city. And there are spaces for human endeavors: within town. People here, nature there. The idea is simple, its execution impossible.

For now, water in the city seems under control again, back where people want it: in showers stripping away lingering grime, in strong coffee and confined behind the levees. Still, there's danger. Facing the challenge of rebuilding, New Orleans seems stuck in the mud—not just mired in the muck caking the city but also trapped by centuries of policy mistakes, especially the fantasy that it can be separated from its surroundings. This notion has been as destructive as the worst flood, and as difficult to avoid.

The people charged with rebuilding New Orleans seem enthralled by this mirage. They serve on committees—Mayor Ray Nagin's and Governor Kathleen Blanco's—with overlapping purviews and dubious authority. But despite their rivalries, the committees agree on at least one point: Levees must be top priority. Scott Cowen, Tulane University's president and part of Nagin's commission, suggests that without better levees other proposals—"world-class public education," improved housing, burnishing the city's "cultural ambience"—will be pointless. Andy Kopplin, executive director of the governor's panel, concurs: "We have to rebuild levees first, so people believe they're safe." To anyone familiar with the city's ecological history, this sounds like a recipe for more disasters.

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From the first, New Orleanians augmented the levees. The project accelerated after an 1849 flood soaked the city for months. Federal authorities, alarmed by the inactivity of the nation's busiest port, sponsored two river studies. The first advocated multi-tiered flood control: levees, spillways and "reservoirs," swaths of wetlands acting like sponges. The second, penned by a future head of the Army Corps of Engineers, was more palatable at a time when wetlands were deemed wasteland. So began a policy known as "levees only." By 1900 New Orleans had levees taller than nearby houses. The river and lake had disappeared behind miniature mountains.

Just one problem: They didn't work. The river became more dangerous, and New Orleans less safe. With its water trapped behind levees, the Mississippi rose higher than ever. But you couldn't tell that to New Orleanians. Not even the huge 1927 flood fully changed their minds. That year the city dynamited a levee fifteen miles downstream, lowering the engorged river and destroying Plaquemines and St. Bernard parishes. The city had purchased its safety by sacrificing its poorer neighbors. (This event has fueled rumors in the Ninth Ward, where some residents and evacuees believe the levee fronting their district was destroyed after Katrina to protect wealthier, whiter areas.)

Segregating spaces hasn't worked. As Katrina demonstrated, it's impossible to separate social and environmental issues in this city.

Still, the levees grew after 1927, despite federal inquiries in which conservationists testified that wetlands loss had exacerbated the disaster. The Army Corps of Engineers still refused to add wetlands to its arsenal. Instead, it built New Orleans a spillway that could shunt part of the river into Lake Pontchartrain—and, through the 1950s, continued to raise the levees.

Meanwhile, the city went on a building binge abetted by a drainage system constructed early in the twentieth century. For 200 years New Orleans had been trapped—a long, thin city on a narrow strip of relatively high ground shadowing the river. The Mississippi had flowed on one side, and a cypress wetland, the "backswamp," had stood on the other. After 1900, though, the city began reclaiming wetlands and expanding onto lower ground. By the 1960s the Lakefront neighborhood, the Lower Ninth Ward and other areas had replaced the backswamp. Ecological constraints had again yielded to ambition in a city captivated by its situation. With levees towering and wetlands gone, the segregation of landscapes seemed complete.

Sorting space had two other byproducts. First, more segregation: racial and socioeconomic this time. Before the 1950s New Orleans was a mixed city. Rich, poor, white, nonwhite—all were neighbors. This wasn't by choice but necessity; with development confined to high ground near the river, there wasn't room for people to move into socially segregated enclaves. But when developers started building tract housing on drained land in the city and nearby suburbs, New Orleanians became stratified, with poorer people of color often concentrated on low land and affluent whites typically occupying higher ground, if not the 'burbs.

Ari Kelman, author of A River and Its City: The Nature of Landscape in New Orleans, *teaches history at the University of California, Davis.*

The second consequence: Controlling nature became harder. Swamps disappeared, both because of urban reclamation and because levees diminished wetlands by keeping floodwaters from recharging the ecosystem. Oil exploration caused coastal erosion and swallowed thousands of acres of wetlands. For every foot the levees grew, it became that much harder to pump water out of the city. Finally, New Orleans began to sink as its watery foundation was replaced by spongy reclaimed land that compacted beneath the city's weight. Urban-environmental feedback loops caused the very problems New Orleanians had been trying to engineer out of their city's site for centuries.

In this setting Katrina made landfall. Its storm surge was too much for the levees. Water overtopped some; others collapsed. The pumps couldn't keep up, and New Orleans filled with water. Mostly the poor, people of color, the infirm and the elderly were left behind. Many died on low ground. The Brookings Institution reports that thirty-eight of greater New Orleans' forty-nine poorest districts flooded. In the city proper, 80 percent of the flooded neighborhoods were majority nonwhite. Segregation—environmental, socioeconomic and racial—resulted in segregated suffering.

The call now for improved levees is predictable. Joe Canizaro of the mayor's commission worries that nobody will return until they "feel safe." He's right. But what if people feel safe yet aren't? Before Katrina, disaster amnesia and denial allowed people to ignore the danger. Past disasters, says engineer Robert Bea of the University of California, Berkeley, were "alarm bells, but New Orleans kept hitting snooze." The city now has to rethink flood control.

Like most engineers, Bea is certain that levees can be constructed to withstand a Category 5 storm. "It's just a matter of political will and funding," he says. But the funding isn't pocket change; the project requires billions. No one knows where that money will come from. While President Bush has promised the Feds will pay for levee repairs, he hasn't made the same promise about levee improvements. If the money is found, the political will must be sustained across fifteen years, the time needed to build levees to a Category 5 standard.

Even if those levees finally get built, they won't do the trick by themselves; engineers will have to learn to work with the city's peculiar ecology rather than trying to dominate it. "Wetlands must be part of the solution," Bea says. If swamps aren't reintroduced, storm surges will overwhelm even the best levees. And if ocean levels keep rising and New Orleans keeps sinking, the city will drown again.

Craig Colten, a Louisiana State University geographer, agrees. He insists low-lying parts of the city shouldn't be rebuilt. His proposal is extremely controversial, with displaced residents understandably invoking their "right of return" and with most members of the reconstruction committees reluctant to reintegrate wetlands into the city after Mayor Nagin got burned for suggesting that the Ninth Ward might not be rebuilt. But Colten still believes that part of the backswamp should ooze into selected low-lying areas. An equitable method, he believes,

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would be to "take land from many neighborhoods—Lakefront, Ninth Ward, Gentilly—and relocate rich, poor, middle class to denser settlement on higher ground." Colten's "new New Orleans," then, would resemble the old New Orleans—from an era before wetlands vanished. It would also touch off battles over whose neighborhoods should be abandoned.

Danielle Taylor, dean of humanities at Dillard University, is certain that the outcome of such fights would favor the powerful. Returning urban districts to swampland, she contends, will shred the urban fabric, wrecking communities that made the city what it was. This echoes the views of Ninth Ward residents, who believe the city's elites saw the flood as the first in what will be waves of urban renewal. Absent affordable housing, redevelopment would leave no room for the poor and people of color, Taylor says. New Orleans would become a sterile—and white—preservation mall, with the French Quarter its anchor store. Colten sympathizes but says that allowing people to return to the lowest land would be "irresponsible."

What's certain is that segregating spaces hasn't worked. As Katrina demonstrated, it's impossible to separate social and environmental issues in this city. New Orleans isn't just a human artifact. Nor, of course, is it wholly natural. It's both: a network of human and nonhuman intermingled, straddling the nature/culture divide. The city must be rebuilt on a more solid foundation: the understanding that allowing no room for nature is as counterproductive as it is unlikely to succeed.

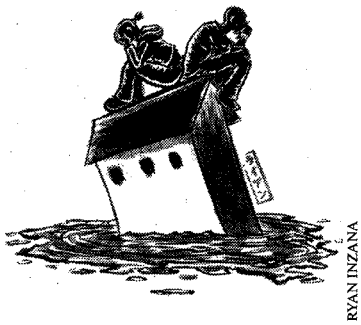
A fresh approach might yield sustainable urban spaces and environmental justice. But this would require hard choices unlikely to be made by committee. Sadly, New Orleans seems destined to find itself where it always has been: in harm's way. ■

THE COUNTRY HAS MOVED ON, BUT BLACK AMERICANS HAVE NOT FINISHED WITH HER.

Katrina Lives

SUSAN STRAIGHT

The nation might believe it has moved on from Katrina, from the name so childish and somehow slightly foreign, not Sherry or Ann or Margaret. Moved on from the scenes of dark-skinned people in exodus—massed in parking lots with faces upturned as if seeking communion or advice or comfort from above, wading through iridescent oiled water up to their thighs, pushing shopping carts, the burros of poor American neighborhoods, loaded with belongings for the exodus. Sometimes, the soft bodies of children were contorted by sleep into impossible shapes, wedged in between the boxes or where a purse would rest if the cart were in a civilized place—say, a grocery store.



RYAN INZANA

But recently, in a municipal auditorium in Southern California, across the country from Louisiana, in a crowd of 1,700 for a touring black theater production, a comedian warmed up the audience (maybe ten white or Latino people were present) with Katrina, because black Americans have not finished with her.

He began, "Y'all, Katrina was haaard on us. She beat us down, didn't she?"

The audience began to shout.

"She wasn't no Category 4 hurricane, y'all. She was a Section 8 hurricane, man, from the projects! Look at her name. Katrina! She sound like she Section 8, don't she?"

The audience screamed with laughter.

The comedian's bald head shone and he threw out his arms. "She was whamming around, banging on doors, hollering, 'Is it a man in there? A man?'"

Then he whirled across the stage with arms outstretched, shrieking improvised karate-style calls as the hurricane moved through the landscape the audience saw.

"He betta have my check! I'ma get wild up in here in Louisiana! Where's my money?!"

I'm paraphrasing here, because I was surrounded by clapping and stomping feet and all of our calls, so loud the comedian waited patiently, expertly, for enough quiet to move on.

"Now, the brother with the TV? Where the hell was he going? Where did he plan to plug that sucker in?"

And everyone knew exactly who he was talking about. Everyone in America saw him, right?

But then the comedian shook his head. "Katrina whupped up on us, y'all," he said. "White folks were evacuees. We were refugees. We were looters. White folks were finders."

He waited for the laughter to die.

"No, y'all, for real. But some white folks were cool." He stalked off to the right side of the stage and began to hitch up his pants. "The government was treating us so bad, like dogs, y'all, that even the Klan stepped in." He pulled his pants up higher, moved his shoulders and changed his whole face. "They sure did." He paced the stage deliberately, slowly, and said in a Klan voice, "Man, the government cain't do this to y'all. It ain't constitutional. We can do it, but the government cain't. Even I feel bad for y'all."

He reached behind him and took the white handkerchief he'd been using to wipe sweat from his scalp and draped it over his head and face, and the audience went wilder. He bent slightly and imitated the man reaching out a hand as if from a boat or plane and said, "Come on, Fred, get in. No, get in! I'm tryin' to help

Susan Straight's last novel was Highwire Moon *(Anchor). Her new novel,* A Million Nightingales, *will be published by Pantheon in March.*

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ya!" He shook the proffered hand. "Oh, OK—it's me, George, OK?" He lifted up the handkerchief so the audience could see his face again. "Now, get up outta the water and come on."

When the stomping and screams died down, he wiped his face again and smiled. "Anybody out there from New Orleans?"

A group of ten or so, mostly women, hollered and waved from the floor seats.

"You made it, y'all!" he said, and waved back.

Sitting beside me was my girlfriend E, who lived in East New Orleans for five years before coming to California to work in the same office with me. East New Orleans was hit hard; her former home was underwater. Her sister lived in Metairie, and the sister's daughters lived Uptown. All had evacuated to Shreveport, to a motel, the night before Katrina struck. For two months they had been living hand to mouth in two motel rooms, eight people, with no assistance from the Red Cross, FEMA or any other government agency. One daughter's boyfriend worked for Best Buy, and his company had been paying for the motel rooms. None of E's sister's friends or relatives outside Louisiana could send her cash, because she had no bank, no account and nowhere to cash the checks. She also had no post office box or address at the motel. By now, they had no patience.

Katrina has made hundreds of thousands of African-Americans feel as if they are not, even now, citizens of this country.

That night, before the theater production began, E told me her sister had become frustrated and wanted to return to her apartment in Metairie to assess the damage and see if she still had a job at Tulane University, where she'd been working for years. Her daughters all insisted on accompanying her to New Orleans. Their homes were total losses, as were their cars. The Metairie apartment had minimal damage, but now the motel rooms in Shreveport were lost, so all eight people are crowded into a two-bedroom apartment, with no jobs and no money.

"And they never got checks from FEMA?" I asked E.

She raised her eyebrows and said in her wryest voice, "Nope. But Pookie done got his check."

"Huh?" I said. "Pookie?"

She grinned. "You know. Pookie. He lives in Philly, but his girlfriend's cousin's grandma lived in New Orleans last year, and he's got an address, so he got his check from FEMA."

"Oh, no," I said. "You mean Pookie."

"Two thousand dollars," E said, shaking her head. "Mmm, mmm, mmm."

A few weeks later E's sister found out she was laid off from Tulane, as was everyone else she knew, and her last check was the one she got on November 1.

On the other side of me at the theater was our friend T, who works for the IRS. She said, "Don't get me started on the damn government and Katrina. They came into the office last week and told us we can't hire anybody, because we're getting millions cut out of our budget to pay for Katrina. Somebody's getting paid for Katrina, but it damn sure doesn't sound like the people who need it."

I have gotten e-mails from several places in Louisiana where churches and communities are still housing and feeding and clothing hurricane victims, months later, without ever having seen a government official or Red Cross employee. These are small towns where evacuees showed up because they had family nearby, or because geographically this seemed a safe place, or because that's where they ran out of gas. In California I have heard the same stories over and over. No government. No money. Just what we are all giving, as citizens. And Katrina has made hundreds of thousands of African-Americans feel as if they are not, even now, citizens of this country.

Americans, and people around the world, registered shock and disbelief at the images of dark-skinned people, many with foreign-sounding vaguely French accents, fleeing their pastel-painted, oddly ornate old homes after Katrina. Ancient cramped homes filled with people who had no cars and not enough money to leave New Orleans. Many were fifth- or sixth-generation Louisianans. Why had they stayed in this dangerous city, which should not have been built where it was, and why did they have so little?

No one brought up the slave markets or Congo Square. New Orleans and its surrounding areas were the heart of the immense slave trade in America for more than 100 years. Africans were brought by ship to New Orleans in great numbers, and even after America took the colony from France, made it a state and then banned importation of African slaves, black people were bought and sold in Louisiana through piracy and interstate trade.

In the 1830s, during Alexis de Tocqueville's historic journey through America, he interviewed the French consul of New Orleans, Guillemin, who told him: "New Orleans has a very great future. If we succeed in conquering, or only in greatly diminishing, the scourge of yellow fever, New Orleans is certainly destined to become the largest city in the New World. In fifty years the Mississippi valley will hold the mass of the American population, and here we hold the gate to the river."

The Mississippi Valley held a huge percentage of the nation's wealth before the Civil War, and Louisiana plantations were populated by thousands of slaves. When Katrina hit, many of their descendants fled rising waters and wind, and looked into television cameras with their own incredulity, asking for a ride away from hell. "I am a citizen of the United States," one woman repeated over and over, waiting with her bundles of possessions beside a freeway overpass.

"Katrina," the comedian said ruefully, closing his warm-up act before the theater production began, the people all around me breathing hard with the aftermath of cathartic laughter, some even wiping their cheeks. "She whupped on us, didn't she?"

Us. People nodded and held up their hands in the darkness of the theater. Citizens of the United States, who are still living in shelters and motels and cars, whose lives will never be the same, not only because water and wind tried to erase those lives but because their lives were negated and minimized and feared and then turned off, on television, after three months.

Even now, as Mayor Ray Nagin begs people to return to New Orleans, residents of the decimated Ninth Ward are being allowed to visit their neighborhood only for a brief time, just to

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see if anything is salvageable. Houses were moved off foundations, destruction was nearly total and news photos show that in area after area, not even a piece of wood or roof has been moved for cleanup yet.

I met two Louisianans recently who described New Orleans with a kind of shock and awe—they were shocked themselves, and they'd grown up in the swamps. "In the city you can go buy a refrigerator," one said. "But you can't get delivery until January, maybe February. So you'll see some woman toting a handcart, pulling a refrigerator over the bridge into the city. Huffing and puffing. Like Mad Max or something."

"This long," the other one said, "and we're just now getting water. Just now."

As layer upon layer of government sifts through requests for funding, Louisianans are beginning to give up.

Years from now, when someone says to a man, "What happened to that '56 Chevy you used to have?" he'll say the one word. When someone says to a teenager, "You were born in New Orleans but you graduated from high school here in Minnesota?" the girl will think the one word.

When someone says, "Your grandfather died in 2005?" there will be the unspoken lament. When someone says to a whole generation of Louisianans, "What happened?" there will be the one-word answer.

Katrina.

In that way, her name will be added to the list that every black American knows, from both handed-down and newly created stories, told by grandparents or children. The names that call up shared knowledge and define moments in hurt and rage—Tuskegee, Tulsa, Rodney King and before him Eula Love, Scottsboro, Jonestown and MOVE and SLA.

Katrina. ■

HOW NEW ORLEANS ABANDONED ITS CITIZENS IN A FLOODED JAIL AND A FLAWED SYSTEM.

Left to Die

BILLY SOTHERN

If, as Dostoyevsky claimed, the degree of civilization of a society can be measured by the treatment of its prisoners, we are in even deeper trouble in New Orleans than many realize. In this city, under the radar of most media, the biggest prison crisis since Attica is unfolding. And no one seems to care, because despite Hurricane Katrina's having "exposed" American poverty and racism, mass incarceration of poor black Americans remains an accepted, if overlooked, fact of modern life. After all, the thinking goes, they did the crime, now they have to do the time. However, like everything else in New Orleans, it's not so simple.

RYAN INZANA

The New Orleans jail complex sits behind the old gothic Orleans Parish Criminal Court and backs up to Interstate 10 in a run-down area of the city. On the days following Katrina, the entire complex sat beneath feet of water. At that time the jails housed more than 8,000 prisoners, the majority of whom were pretrial detainees, people with the fundamental presumption of innocence but without the funds for bail or a lawyer to get them out before trial. There was a larger than usual population of pretrial inmates when the storm came because before it arrived the police had conducted sweeps to clear the streets, picking up people for petty crimes like loitering or trespassing, and because other parish jails had evacuated their prisoners to New Orleans.

Despite the universal awareness of the risk of flooding in the city, the low-lying jail failed to execute any real evacuation plan. Instead, even faster than New Orleans police abandoned the citizens of New Orleans, many of the sheriff's deputies who guard the city's prisoners abandoned their charges and left men and women wondering whether they were going to die as water rose in their locked cells. As prisoner Dan Bright told Human Rights Watch, "They left us to die there."

Prisoners helped one another escape the flood by prying open cell doors, breaking through windows and finding higher ground in the jail. While officials deny that any bodies were found, many prisoners who were there insist that they saw floating bodies. Those who made it out were rounded up by the few remaining guards and gathered on a nearby Interstate overpass. People remained there for almost two days—without water, under the sun—appearing as a blur of orange jumpsuits from the CNN cameras in helicopters flying above. They were left to urinate and defecate on themselves, hampered by restraints so tight that a month later attorneys who visited them could still see dark purple bands around their wrists. Eventually buses arrived and the detainees were transferred randomly to prisons around the state, but without the papers that might easily distinguish a person who had been arrested for illegally reading tarot cards or "angling without a license" from someone charged with a serious, violent crime.

As bad as this was, it was only the beginning of the indignities the evacuated prisoners were to face. They found themselves in an impromptu patchwork of overcrowded state prisons, parish jails and facilities opened just to accommodate evacuated prisoners. The unluckiest among them, mostly from Jefferson Parish, found themselves at Jena Correctional, a former juvenile prison owned by the Wackenhut Corrections Corporation that was closed after

Billy Sothern, an anti–death penalty lawyer and writer living in New Orleans, is working on a book about being a young lawyer representing men on death row in the Deep South.

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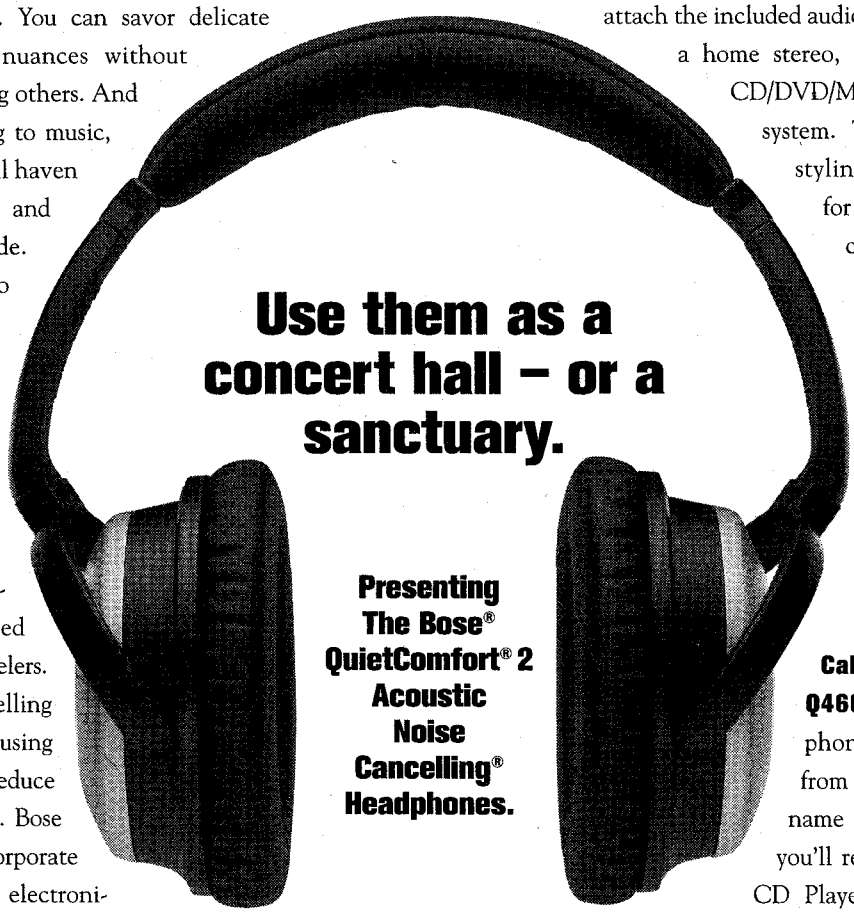

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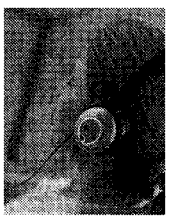

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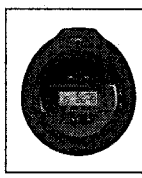

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the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana, Human Rights Watch and the Justice Department exposed widespread beatings of incarcerated children there in the late 1990s. That spirit was kept alive in the new incarnation of the prison: Evacuated prisoners were routinely and viciously beaten by their jailers, guards from other facilities who were without a chain of command and for whom there was zero possibility of accountability. Rachel Jones of the Louisiana Capital Assistance Center, a pro bono attorney who was working there at the time, told me that after being a public defender in Brooklyn and a capital trial attorney in Louisiana, "I have never seen anything like it."

Jones said the inmates were bruised all over their bodies. They passed her little notes saying "help" when the guards weren't looking and reported that guards were calling them "nigger" and "boy." When she returned days later to follow up, they had been brutalized even more; some reported having received beatings from guards as retaliation. After visiting with many inmates at various prisons and jails, it became clear to her that these incidents were widespread, and she made it her top priority to get guys who didn't belong there out of jail.

Louisiana, with one of the highest incarceration rates in the country, does not have a single agency dedicated to the rights of prisoners.

Jones and a handful of other lawyers, including Phyllis Mann, a veteran Louisiana criminal defense attorney, began poring over the available records on the evacuated inmates and found thousands who had been unconstitutionally and illegally imprisoned. Many should have been released weeks or months earlier, as their sentences had long since expired. Some had been picked up on charges in the days before the storm for municipal offenses like unpaid traffic tickets and had never been before a judge, as required by the Constitution. Others were simply sitting in jail, awaiting trial for minor crimes for which the maximum sentence was far less than the amount of time they had already served. While some of these people have been released in the past month, many remain incarcerated and separated from their families when they are most needed. For example, as recently as mid-November, David Moffett, a 43-year-old man from New Orleans, was still incarcerated in a Bossier Parish jail on a ten-day sentence begun August 22 for public drunkenness.

Who was there to make sure that these citizens, victims of one of the country's worst natural disasters, were not further deprived of their Eighth Amendment right to dignified treatment as prisoners, their right to due process under law and their right to the presumption of innocence? There was no public defender's office zealously fighting for their rights because New Orleans has no real public defender's office. Nor was there a crusading prisoners' rights organization on the ground to provide meaningful oversight of the state's treatment of its vulnerable wards. Beyond the handful of volunteer lawyers, no one was there for these people, and though the volunteers have been diligent, their work has not been sufficient to address the needs of everyone.

It is hard to believe that a state with one of the highest per capita incarceration rates in the United States—which itself is a world leader in incarceration—does not have a single organization or agency dedicated to the rights of prisoners, but it's true. Sadly, by orders of magnitude, there were more rescue people in Louisiana to protect the "animal rights" of dogs than there were lawyers or activists to protect the human rights of thousands of our citizens.

While New Orleans does not have a full-time public defender, the city is obligated by the Sixth Amendment of the Constitution, like every other town in the United States, to provide free attorneys to poor people who are otherwise unable to defend themselves against charges leveled by the state. That service in New Orleans is provided through the Orleans Parish Indigent Defender Board, which contracts with a group of part-time attorneys who, when they are not taking paid cases or writing wills and estates for their regular clients, are assigned to represent the thousands of poor people annually charged with crimes in New Orleans. Like so many things in the city, these part-time contracts have become patronage positions appointed more on the basis of fealty to political players than concern for the rights of the accused. In the weeks and months after the storm, these public defenders were nowhere to be found, although they were counsel of record for nearly all the evacuated prisoners. When asked about the prison crisis and his concerns about the rights of his clients, Tilden Greenbaum, head of the Indigent Defender Board, told the *New York Times* his clients were being patient. "Sooner or later, we're going to have to start making noise about it," he said. "But given the magnitude of what everybody's been through, now is not the time to push."

Meg Garvey, another pro bono lawyer who has been working with evacuated inmates, isn't feeling patient at all. She started pushing months ago to try to help these clients. "So many of these guys were in here for minor stuff, and when the storm came their communication with their families was completely cut off," she said. "They couldn't be part of keeping their families safe or together. Now the world is changing dramatically while they are in prison. Babies are born. Their grandma dies. Their family resettles in Texas. And they are in for nothing. They are desperate to return to their families."

Given all the minor things with which people ordinarily run out of patience, like rush-hour traffic and long lines at the bank, it is hard to imagine much patience from people who have been unconstitutionally detained for months after a nightmarish experience of rising water in a locked cell. Certainly, it is inappropriate for their lawyers to be counseling patience while they are wrongfully imprisoned. However, according to Garvey, the prisoners *are* incredibly patient, and they're grateful for the assistance from the handful of lawyers who offered help without any expectation of compensation and disregarding the turmoil that their own lives had been thrown into by the storm. For the rest of us, that there are a few pro bono lawyers providing a constitutionally mandated service the government is neglecting and has neglected for decades should sting, not give comfort.

New Orleans needs a politically independent public defender's office—one that not only provides the minimum representation guaranteed by the Constitution but that deals holistically with clients, their families and their communities. Such an agency could begin to address the collateral consequences that mass

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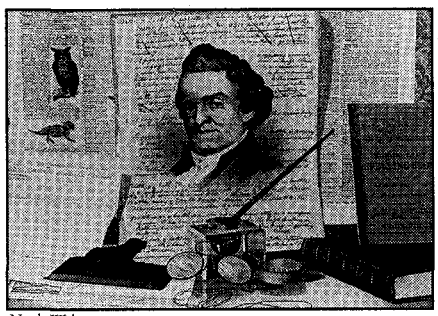
Professor Lerer is Professor of Comparative Literature at Stanford University, where his awards include the Hoagland Prize for Undergraduate Teaching. A skilled lecturer, he is also an extraordinary master of dialect and accent. He will dazzle you with his gift for reading aloud in Old and Middle English.



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Noah Webster.

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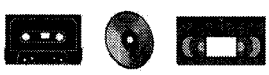

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incarceration has on the families and communities where a large percentage of adult men are behind bars. Further, we need public institutions dedicated to the principle that the rights of prisoners are not mere abstractions but guarantees, and that there are actual remedies when those rights are violated. This is imperative in a state where incarceration has become the one-size-fits-all response to social ills caused by failed schools, a decimated economy and meager and crumbling public housing.

Here as elsewhere, such institutions do not need heaps of money. They require instead a change of attitude—whereby people deprived of their personal liberty are still valued and protected by society. In the legal defense context, this means dedicated, full-time public defenders insulated from political pressure, like the Public Defender Service in Washington, DC, or the Bronx Defenders in New York City—offices of true believers who make the adversarial process a challenge to the state's immense power to incarcerate and even kill its citizens.

The storm created opportunities for structural reform in areas where the government has long failed its citizens. With the city's dysfunctional indigent defense almost nonexistent, this may be the only chance in a generation to re-create a major urban public defense system in a manner that addresses the impact of criminalization and mass incarceration on poor families while providing constitutionally mandated services.

New Orleans is a struggling city in one of the poorest parts of the country. We have been flattened by a storm. There are of course many other pressing needs as we rebuild the city and the region. But if we are ever going to be a civilized city, or country, we are going to have to begin to work as hard for the weakest and most maligned among us as we do for the strongest and most sympathetic. If we don't, any of us could one day face the consequences. ■

THE SURPRISING BENEFITS OF DOING WHAT WE NEED TO DO.

Apollo Now

WILLIAM GREIDER

The tragedy of New Orleans provides Americans with an ominous metaphor for understanding our future. We did not fix the levees, though we were warned. That is a simple way of expressing the national predicament in this new century. As a society, we are engulfed by similar vulnerabilities—forms of ecological and economic deterioration that are profoundly more threatening than an occasional hurricane. And we have been told. Yet we are not "fixing the levees." Preoccupied with current desires and discontents, this very wealthy nation has lost sight of its future.

RYAN INZANA

The levee metaphor, vividly dramatized by the Gulf Coast disaster, has the potential to move the country in a new direction—to inspire a generational shift in thinking that could launch a new era of fundamental reforms. But the imperative to act requires nothing less than a reordering of American life—a result that seems most unlikely. Given the corrupted condition of representative democracy, politicians are seldom punished for keeping the hard truth from voters. The mass culture marinates American citizens in false triumphalism.

Events, nevertheless, have delivered a teachable moment—an opportunity to reframe and reargue many long-neglected matters. The wheels are coming off the right-wing bus. The President of Oil and War is no longer much believed. The vast suffering and physical destruction in New Orleans have made all too visible what ecologists and social critics have been trying to explain for years. Their warnings once seemed too abstract or remote to require public action. New Orleans announced, for those who will listen, that the future is now.

Oceans are warming, the Arctic ice cap is shrinking. The deep topsoil of Iowa is draining into the Mississippi River, leaving behind chemical swamps. Good drinking water, once freely available to all, has become a scarce commodity for commercial exploitation. Much of the population, dispersed farther and farther from urban centers, is pole-axed by soaring gasoline prices. Meanwhile, the gorgeous abundance of consumer goods continues to poison earth, air and water. This year, Americans will throw away something like 100 million cell phones, pagers, pocket PCs and portable music players, interring their toxic contents in the "dump" called nature.

Should we blame the farmers? The oil and chemical companies? The teenagers who love their gadgets? The politics of blame-and-shame was brilliantly perfected thirty years ago by the environmental movement but gradually lost its effectiveness, partly because it framed the contest as a righteous struggle between good guys and bad guys—virtuous citizens versus dirty industrial polluters (and often their workers). It felt good to identify the culprits, but moral indignation eventually loses its power to enforce. Plus, the enormity of what we face is too all-encompassing. Not many of us can truly claim innocence.

The predicament is fundamental and universal: It is the collision between industrial society and nature. Politicians and environmental activists can be forgiven for not wishing to take on the "American way of life," but essentially that is what's required. Eliminating this collision, before it destroys the very basis of modern prosperity and life itself, calls for nothing less than the transformation of the American industrial system and mass-consumption economy. Among other things, it means reinventing the processes of production and redesigning virtually every product. It means taking responsibility for what we make

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and consume—recovering what is now discarded in landfills, dumped in rivers or vaporized in air and atmosphere. It means remanufacturing components and materials into new products.

Daunting and radical as that all might sound, the good news is that these great changes are technologically feasible. The transformation will take decades, even generations, to complete, but industrial experts affirm that it is doable. Starting promptly on this historic commitment will avoid (or at least mitigate) the larger catastrophes ahead.

The real obstacle is political, not scientific, because reform depends on the choices society makes (or fails to make). Who is the "we" responsible for these choices? One way or another, it is all of us. Virtually every institution of capitalism—manufacturers and merchants and, above all, the financiers who discipline them—will be compelled to alter routine functions in deep ways. But so will consumers and workers. As with other aspects of American life, the burden will not fall evenly on every citizen. Sacrifices and disruptions are typically maldistributed downward on the ladder of income and status. The goals of environmentalism often sound preciously elitist because the most severe costs usually fall on the working class or poor, people with limited margins. Not surprisingly, they sometimes resist.

Overcoming the ecological threat could become this generation's Apollo project, creating millions of high-wage skilled jobs.

It will be essential to recognize that inequality is an ecological issue. If this sweeping transformation proceeds, the impact on work, wages and living standards has to be a central component of the reform agenda—not just necessary for political support but also to insure that a healthier society emerges from the deep changes. In fact, the logical promise of industrial transformation is that it will lead to better lives for all—improved circumstances and health, greater economic security and brighter prospects for the future. Every ordinary American wants that, and every ordinary American is entitled to expect it.

Making it happen requires a new progressive perspective that fuses the ecological imperative with economic outcomes. We need a synthesis that replaces fear with hope—not as rhetoric but bolstered with proof that this goal is attainable for all. Inventive minds are already working on it.

The Apollo Alliance offers one positive model for reshaping the future. It started from the premise that American politics will not undertake a serious agenda on global warming and alternative energy sources until labor groups and environmentalists come together on the objective. "When Apollo started, political progress on energy was mired in the jobs-versus-environment debate," says Jeff Rickert, Apollo's acting executive director. "In order to break that deadlock, we proposed a new way of thinking—a plan that removed the wedge between environmentalists and labor unions by focusing on the job-creating aspects of a clean-energy investment policy."

Packaged and tested with rigorous economic analysis, the Apollo proposal calls for a ten-year, $300 billion investment agenda—federal financing to foster development of alternative fuels, innovative eco firms and energy-conserving reforms in housing, green building codes, transportation and other realms. These investments, analysts estimate, would generate 3.3 million new jobs. One strategist noted a resemblance to John F. Kennedy's moon-landing initiative in the 1960s—an endeavor that also created high-wage skilled jobs and new tech sectors. Overcoming the ecological threat could become this generation's Apollo project. Hence the name.

The public capital would be invested—some directly, some as subsidy incentives—in new fuels (solar, hydrogen, biomass, wind); in high-efficiency vehicles as a transition to post-petroleum transportation; in rebuilding urban infrastructure for "smart growth"; in rapid transit and regional rail networks like the high-speed Maglev trains; and in a modernized electrical system that reduces carbon emissions and increases efficient transmission. These and other ventures, Apollo analysts estimate, would generate $1.4 trillion in GDP gain for the United States, and nearly $1 trillion more in personal incomes. The investments would be accompanied by stronger regulatory protections to make sure the subsidies produce real results.

As an organizing device, the Apollo concept has worked brilliantly. Some twenty-one labor unions and the AFL-CIO, nineteen environmental organizations and fifty-eight business leaders have signed on, along with civil rights and equal-justice groups that recognize that retrofitting buildings and other projects can bring good jobs back to inner cities. Nine "Apollo governors" are pushing variations on the concept as state legislation. In Pennsylvania, a coal state, Governor Ed Rendell passed an Advanced Energy Portfolio Standard stating that 18 percent of retail electricity must come from alternative fuel sources. A new wind-power factory is set to open that will bring 1,000 jobs, with more jobs to come. Virtually every Democratic presidential candidate in 2004 endorsed Apollo. Democratic leaders in Congress recently embraced the plan and say they will run on the theme in 2006.

Washington isn't going to enact such a bold program while oil-based Republicans remain in power. But the Apollo agenda is generating forward momentum on state and local levels, field-testing the politics of fusion as blue-green partners argue out their differences. In California a plan for homeowner tax breaks to finance a "million solar roofs" temporarily stalled (and rightly so) on labor's demand for prevailing wage rates for the workers who will do the installation. When Washington State was enacting its green building code, the paper industry initially persuaded machinists and carpenters to oppose the higher standards for timbering as a threat to local jobs. But the unions reversed themselves when the alliance demonstrated that the industry's job claims were false. (In fact, the legislation gives preference to regionally produced lumber.)

"We have a lot of examples where we have gotten rid of the wedge, a few cases where we failed," Rickert said. "It's still the beginning, but I think we've gotten past the toughest patch." In one notable example, the United Mine Workers Union, whose coal miners are the most directly threatened by climate-change reform, has officially acknowledged that global warming must be addressed. That might seem like a small step, but it puts the UMW out in front of ExxonMobil.

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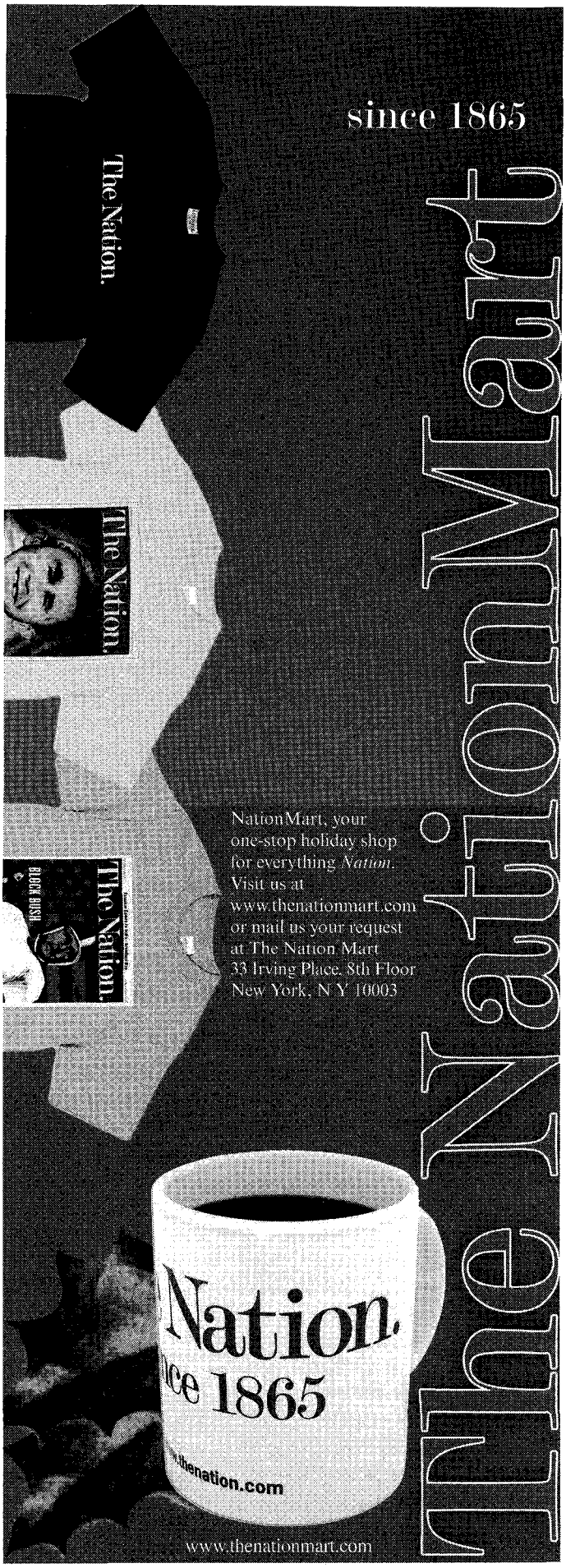
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Meanwhile, a new coalition of Christian conservatives—Set America Free—has launched its own campaign to reduce US oil consumption with reform ideas that parallel the Apollo Alliance. Unfortunately, both left and right efforts are embracing the utterly illusory, soothing-sounding goal of "energy independence" within the next decade or two. But the two efforts demonstrate the potential for new alliances that leap across the usual barriers of party and ideology.

While our government remains indifferent, the European Union has launched a coherent, long-term strategy for industrial transformation—nothing less. The EU is forcing industry, sector by sector, to undertake the redesign of products, production processes and packaging. These industries have resisted the specific costs, of course, but they do not argue with the goal or complain about "bad science."

Starting next year, European auto manufacturers will be required to "take back" their old vehicles and recover 85 percent of the content, reformulating the materials for use in new cars or other products. Consumer electronics, computers and cell phones are next in line. This program leaps far beyond the recycling of old newspapers or bottles familiar to American consumers, because the Europeans put the ecological responsibility directly on the manufacturers, not individual consumers. Forced to recover value from their discarded consumer goods, companies will have a strong incentive to design the toxics out of their products and to make them easier to disassemble and remanufacture.

Ford and General Motors will have to comply with the EU rules, since they make cars in Europe. But imagine how Detroit would react if Congress or a future President dared to propose a similar "take back" law for the United States. The usual naysayers—the Business Roundtable and Chamber of Commerce—would unleash their dogs (pet scientists and economists) to explain why this is impossible. Ford and GM would wail about massive job losses. The United Auto Workers would likely side with the companies, as it generally has in the past, when reformers demanded greater fuel efficiency and auto safety, or less tailpipe pollution. (No matter that the US auto industry's resistance to change is a major reason it continues to lose customers.)

Washington regulators decided long ago, with heavy-handed advice from corporate lawyers and lobbyists, that supposedly trivial amounts of toxic pollution should be tolerated. But science marches toward the opposite conclusion. The prevalence of toxic industrial chemicals in the environment, even at extremely low levels of exposure, is being implicated in rising cancer rates and also in disabilities and deformities in children. That shouldn't surprise us. The chemicals are, after all, poisonous. But corporate-driven propaganda has often overwhelmed science in the United States.

Even so, the struggle for industrial transformation advances here on many fronts. Activist campaigns are encouraging American companies and sectors to adopt higher ecological standards in their products and purchasing, covering everything from wood to hamburgers. Other efforts are developing enterprises that embrace the new values.

The concept of take-back laws is slowly gaining traction at the state level for consumer electronics and packaging, though not yet for cars. Local governments, which bear the financial burden

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of waste disposal, are beginning to think seriously about shifting some of the cost to manufacturers, through fees or taxes on sales—giving companies a strong reason to produce less waste in the first place. Xerox and other industry leaders are developing take-back and reuse programs, anticipating the legal responsibility that will someday be the standard. The ultimate goal is producing waste-free products.

California—first in the nation as usual—has enacted a take-back law for computer monitors and television sets; the customer pays a fee of about $10 up front, financing the eventual recycling and recovery costs when these items are discarded. Maine's new law on recycling electronics is much closer to the European approach, however, because it compels the manufacturers to internalize these costs on their balance sheets. The companies, not the consumers, will either pay pound-for-pound for recycling their worn-out products or do the work themselves. Either way, the cost pressure is on them to reduce waste and harm—a concept known as "extended producer responsibility."

A potential breakthrough exists in a consortium of legislators from ten Northeastern states. The consortium members are developing a model state law based on the Maine example. If they get it right, we could see rapid political advances at the state level. (Bush's Environmental Protection Agency, meanwhile, studied the matter for four years—and then punted.)

When industrial transformation does finally come to our shores, Americans will discover a wonderful wrinkle—it creates jobs, many millions of them. The consuming public will be more enthusiastic about serious reform once folks recognize that industrial reordering delivers good jobs with good wages for Americans—not more bucket-shop employment that exploits workers.

If the United States takes the high road, every level of our society can benefit from the economics of doing what we need to do anyway. The metaphor of the New Orleans levees poses the question: Will we decide to reshape the future in positive terms, or sit back and let the bad stuff happen to us? ■

CHECKING OUT WHAT'S FUNNY THESE DAYS AT A CONCLAVE OF CUTTING-EDGE COMICS.

Fear and Laughing in Las Vegas

PAUL KRASSNER

"I'm covering this for *The Nation*," I told Jerry Seinfeld.

Chris Rock interjected, "The Nation of Islam?"

We were in Las Vegas—where Mayor Oscar Goodman had recently suggested that those who deface freeways with graffiti should have their thumbs cut off on TV—at the first annual Comedy Festival, a recent three-day laugh-quest featuring some thirty-five shows, presented by HBO and AEG Live, sponsored by TBS. There was a panel about comedy with Seinfeld, Rock, Robert Klein and Garry Shandling, moderated by CNN news anchor Anderson Cooper. Shandling asked Cooper, "What do you do one night when you're just not feeling funny?" Seinfeld later received the first annual The Comedian award, given to a performer "who has most influenced and furthered the art of comedy." He said, "I'm honored, but awards are stupid. Every insurance company, hotel, car dealer—they get these jack-off trophies." Seinfeld is best known for his observational humor, so after the presentation I asked if he'd ever done a political joke. He recalled one: "Anybody who wants to be President shows evidence of a brain that's not working too well."

RYAN INZANA

The festival kickoff was a two-hour taping of a TV special, *Earth to America*, a comedic approach to raising consciousness about the environmental crisis. Executive producer Laurie David called it "a little bit of prime-time history." The show began with a film clip of her husband, Larry, star of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, dressed as a modern Paul Revere, riding into Vegas on a horse and shouting, "Global warming is coming!" "Coming to you from Las Vegas, the conscience of America," said emcee Tom Hanks. Ray Romano: "I think it's very appropriate, we're trying to conserve energy in a town that uses more energy than any other town in the world." Bill Maher: "[We] have a President who thinks Kyoto is that guy his father threw up on in Japan." Wanda Sykes: "I don't wanna go home and see my aunt out on the corner, trickin' for her medicine—'Tickle your balls for an anti-inflammatory?'"

At the after-party two bodyguards were assigned to Laurie David; none to Robert F. Kennedy Jr. He had thanked the performers at *Earth to America* for volunteering their time; actually, they got union scale. For the other shows, performers were highly paid. A ticket for all events cost $1,500.

The spirit of Lenny Bruce hovered over the festival. Robert Klein said Bruce was "good, funny, socially important—the best and highest a comedian could do." Perhaps Bruce's most audacious onstage moment was in 1962 when he became the voice of Holocaust orchestrator Adolf Eichmann: "My defense—I was a soldier. I saw the end of a conscientious day's effort. I watched through the portholes. I saw every Jew burned and turned into soap. Do you people think yourselves better because you burned your enemies at long distance with missiles without ever seeing what you had done to them? Hiroshima *auf Wiedersehen*..."

Paul Krassner is the author of One Hand Jerking: Reports From an Investigative Satirist, *published by Seven Stories Press. He self-publishes* The Disneyland Memorial Orgy *at paulkrassner.com.*

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Bruce was arrested for obscenity that night. His controversial portrayal had particularly inspired Bill Maher, who lost his ABC show, *Politically Incorrect*, because six days after 9/11 he said, "We have been the cowards, lobbing cruise missiles from 2,000 miles away—that's cowardly. Staying in the airplane when it hits the building, say what you want about it, it's not cowardly."

After the terrorist attacks, Larry King asked Maher how soon it would be all right to be funny again. "So like two months, that's a good time? One month is a good time?" (He also asked Dr. Andrew Weil, "Are bulimics throwing up more often?") Less than three weeks after 9/11, at a roast for Hugh Hefner, Gilbert Gottfried began, "Tonight I'm going to perform under my Muslim name, Hasn't bin Laid." He got a big laugh, but when he closed with, "I have to catch a flight to Los Angeles. I can't get a direct flight. They said they have to stop at the Empire State Building first," the audience booed. Which brings us to Homeland Security. I had gone through a metal detector at the airport, and now again, along with 4,145 others, at The Colosseum in Caesars Palace. I had to take my shoes off before I could fly, and now I got wanded to preserve the safety of comedians. My weapon, a tape recorder, was temporarily confiscated. There was even a sign warning HECKLING WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. Would-be hecklers were informed that they'd be removed from the concert hall if they heckled a performer, and would not be given refunds.

Jon Stewart was in top form: "That suicide-bomb married couple were gonna blow themselves up at a wedding in Jordan. I'd say... relationship issues." "The Emergency Broadcast System is a test of your remote control." "Posting the Ten Commandments is as effective as posting EMPLOYEES MUST WASH HANDS." "Senator Bill Frist, he's a doctor and he says that AIDS could be transmitted from sweat and tears. Not unless your penis weeps while you're fucking somebody." Although Stewart is used to audiences that virtually all agree with his stance on Iraq, now when he talked about George Bush's renewed push to justify the war, he couldn't help but notice that those in the front rows were not laughing and applauding like those "in the less expensive seats. You like the way things are going just fine." He began pointing at different sections of the orchestra: "You run Halliburton. You make bombs. You own NASCAR."

Lewis Black, seen weekly on *The Daily Show*, is an incisive and outspoken stand-up comic, but when he performed at the annual Radio and Television Correspondents Dinner, he found himself sitting next to Dick Cheney, one of his favorite targets. I asked Black how that went. "It worked out fine," he told me, "as I had destroyed my usual act, in the name of entertainment. As long as you take the gig, you should be good at it, and I feel that nothing would have been accomplished if I had pissed all over them. I didn't want to spend the next week talking to reporters about it. I stopped and talked to the Vice President as I left the dais. One of his closest friends is the brother of a close friend of mine who passed away a number of years ago. I asked him to please say hi to his friend for me. I hadn't seen him in quite some time. So basically I asked the Vice President to be my messenger boy, and hopefully it would keep him out of trouble for a few minutes."

There had been a rumor that Dave Chappelle would do a three-hour set, but he did just one hour. "You can't do three hours in Las Vegas," Chris Rock remarked. "They want people to get out to the casinos and gamble." Chappelle's appearance at the festival was the first event to be sold out. After all, he had fled to South Africa, leaving behind his successful *Chappelle's Show* and a $50 million development deal. Now there were six security guards in red jackets sitting on the floor at the foot of the stage, facing the audience. "Holy shit," were Chappelle's first words in response to the ovation when he walked on stage. "Bottom line: If you haven't heard about me, I'm fucking insane!" "Kanye did the bravest thing." (After Hurricane Katrina, rapper Kanye West said, "George Bush doesn't care about black people.") "The bravest. I'm gonna miss him. I'm not gonna risk my career to tell white people obvious things. I saw what happened to the Dixie Chicks." "We have to work on our vocabulary. 'Minorities': a high-class way of calling you a nigger to your face. 'Get away from my car, you minority!'" "Vicente Fox said that Mexican immigrants do jobs that not even blacks do. He is right. Till I see a nigger selling oranges on the street, I can't talk." "I'm not a crackhead. I was only living out my dream: to get to the top of show business and go back to Africa."

After the invasion of Iraq, Jay Leno, David Letterman and Conan O'Brien served as cheerleaders for the war. That's changed.

Unlike Richard Pryor's confessional comedy, Chappelle did not say what precipitated his departure to fulfill his "dream." Pryor had the ability to reach into his unconscious and turn himself inside out for the benefit of an audience. Like an alchemist transforming pain into laughter, he revealed the anguished private dialogues he held with his heart attack and with the pipe through which he had freebased cocaine, balancing on the cusp of tragedy and absurdity. He was self-educated, and on TV he advised children to turn off their TV sets and read books. He wrote a piece in 1971 when I was editing *The Realist* about the disproportionate number of blacks fighting and dying in Vietnam, which he titled "Uncle Sam Wants *You,* Nigger!" On the day he died, December 10, Dick Gregory and Mort Sahl performed at McCabe's in Los Angeles. Gregory eulogized Pryor as "a true genius," and Sahl reminisced about Gene McCarthy, who had died that same day.

After the invasion of Iraq, Jay Leno, David Letterman and Conan O'Brien helped demonize Saddam Hussein and served as cheerleaders for the war. But as the un-brainwashing of America goes, so goes the late-night talk-show monologue. O'Brien: "Congress stepped up the pressure on President Bush to come up with an exit strategy for Iraq. Today, Bush said, 'I have an exit strategy—I'm leaving office in 2008.'" Sleazy government officials are now easy-listening joke references. Triumph the Insult Comic Dog: "What does Karl Rove have for breakfast? Bagel with a smear." What's shocking about Lenny Bruce these days is the fact that he was punished for his political and religious views in the guise of violating obscenity laws. What's obscene by current standards is that his comment after channeling Eichmann would end up in a police report as follows: "Then talking about the war he stated, 'If we would have lost the war, they would have strung [President Harry] Truman up by the balls.'" Lenny was a lone voice back then, but irreverence has since become an industry. ■

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In Fact . . .

NADER'S 'UNSAFE' AT 40

■ William Greider writes: Ralph Nader and dozens of old friends got together recently to celebrate the fortieth birthday of a book—*Unsafe at Any Speed*, his auto industry exposé. It had its origin in "The Safe Car You Can't Buy," which first appeared in *The Nation* in 1959. The book was the starting gun for the consumer movement and, much more, for citizen activism. At the gathering Nader introduced some early collaborators—*Village Voice* columnist Jim Ridgeway, who wrote a riveting account of Nader's campaign in the then-liberal *New Republic*, and publisher Richard Grossman, who created a hard-hitting genre known as "Nader books." Some of his young deep-digging associates described their work in what is an ongoing fight. The old crusader, we are pleased to report, has not mellowed.

FALSE ENCOUNTERS

■ Stephen F. Cohen writes: American officials have a long-standing habit of attributing positive developments in Russia to the United States, which contributes to the ill-informed impression that Russians cannot reform their country without our guidance. A small but telling example appeared in the *Weekly Standard* (September 26) in a letter from Max Kampelman, US ambassador for nuclear arms negotiations in the Reagan Administration. Kampelman claims to have arranged the first meeting between the great Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov and the last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. According to Kampelman, he achieved this feat at a US Embassy dinner in Moscow hosted by President Reagan, which took place May 31, 1988. Considering the significant role the relationship between these two historical Russian figures played in Gorbachev's reforms and even in the end of the Soviet Union, Kampelman's claim, if true, would warrant at least a footnote in historical accounts. But it isn't true, and his mistaken assertion should be corrected, which *The Weekly Standard* declined to do. In the second volume of Sakharov's memoirs he writes that "my first face-to-face encounter with Gorbachev" occurred January 15, 1988, at a meeting in Moscow devoted to nuclear disarmament and human rights. It was a memorable encounter. Sakharov thanked Gorbachev for having freed him after nearly seven years in internal exile, and Gorbachev responded with equal warmth. Two other aspects of Sakharov's account should be noted. The January 15 meeting was organized by a Soviet foundation, not an American one. And it helps explain "the smiles and the immediate warmth" Kampelman observed when Sakharov and Gorbachev encountered each other (again) four and half months later.

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

If you really believe America should withdraw, publish a plan on how it can be done without letting Iraq fall into chaos. Any politician who comes up with such a plan will certainly get my vote. Any politician who voted for the invasion will never get my vote, and any politician who suggests that we cut and run will never get my vote either. JOHN WILLIAMS

Washington, DC

■ Your editorial represents the wrong course in Iraq, the war on terror and the broader Middle East. It is OK for good Americans to disagree on the wisdom of removing Saddam Hussein from power in the first place, but it is obvious that we cannot withdraw now. Terrorists like Zarqawi know they cannot impose their dark vision on Iraq and the Middle East with the US military standing in their way. As for Democratic presidential candidates who support the war, such as Clinton, Biden and Bayh, they are saying and doing what they truly believe is in the best interests of the United States. There are many Democrats out there, including myself, who will not support a candidate who argues for immediate withdrawal. GAVIN FIELDS

New York City

■ For God's sake, enough is enough! The Clintons, Kerrys and Liebermans can take their hawkish rhetoric to the unemployment office. Yes, there is a war to be fought, but it's not in Iraq—it's here at home and it's a declared war on Democrats who do nothing while an insidious, reprehensible criminal enterprise continues to run America headlong into the gutter. To arms! JIM MCCABE

Miami

■ Hooray for *The Nation* in throwing down the gauntlet to prowar Democrats like Clinton, Dean, Bayh, Biden et al. You say you will be identifying the antiwar stalwarts. To show your objectivity and to reward the early and staunch opponents of the war, please do not overlook Republicans in the House—Walter Jones (North Carolina), Ron Paul (Texas), Wayne Gilchrest (Maryland) and John Duncan (Tennessee)—who questioned the war long before the Democrats who have lately switched sides. JOEL LUMER

Endwell, NY

■ My Congressman, Maurice Hinchey, has been consistent in his opposition to the war. He is one of the many good leaders to consider for President. He's tough under fire, right on all the important issues and a man of integrity (www.house.gov/hinchey). JACK GILROY

Oak Harbor, Wash.

■ Allow me to offer someone who fits your bill. Mark Wilson will be running against Maria Cantwell for senator from Washington. Cantwell, a Democrat, voted for the war as well as other Republican agendas. Wilson, a founding member of the Marine Corps Veterans for Peace, is calling for an immediate withdrawal from Iraq (http://votemark.org). STEVEN PHILLIPS

Lake Oswego, Ore.

■ Quietly and with little fanfare a senator works diligently out here in Portland for the good of the country and the state he represents. He also *voted against the war*. Senator Ron Wyden (http://wyden.senate.gov/) is a Democrat you should be getting in touch with ASAP. ED LAFRANCE

Oakland, Calif.

■ I was very encouraged to read that your editorial board will not endorse prowar Democrats in 2006. On December 15, I announced my intention to seek the Green Party nomination to challenge Dianne Feinstein for Senate in November 2006 (www.todd4senate.org). TODD CHRETIEN

West Pawlet, Vt.

■ I am an announced Republican/Independent candidate from Vermont who has called for an end to the Iraq War and impeachment of Bush/Cheney. In addition, I am attempting to recruit large numbers of "citizen" Congressional candidates to run with me who will pledge their full independence from both parties (www.2ltmorrisseau.com). DENNIS MORRISSEAU

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LETTERS
CONTINUED

Montgomery, Tex.
■ I am considering a run for a Congressional seat here in Texas. I've received a lot of encouragement from local Democrats but am having trouble making the party leaders understand my opposition to the war. Having considerable experience in and understanding of the Middle East, I believe the war to be not just wrong and a failure but a strategic and catastrophic disaster for America. Local Democrats do not want to campaign on such bad news. But if the people are not told in the 2006 election cycle, the Democrats may inherit the war and the blame in 2008. KENT HARGETT

St. Paul
■ I announced my candidacy for the Senate in June 2004 (www.michaelcavlan.org). I have consistently called the Iraq War what it is: a brutal, immoral, racist war, fought for oil and military industry profits. As a longtime peace activist, I have supported the immediate withdrawal of forces from Iraq and a stop to building permanent military bases there. Our campaign is fighting the root causes of the Iraq War—corporate power's influence on our government. I praise your clarity and insight and the voice you give those silenced by the corporate media. You embody the principles of Jeffersonian democracy and the Fourth Estate. MICHAEL CAVLAN

Sun City Center, Fla.
■ Jeeni Criscenzo (www.jeeniforcongress.com) is a candidate for Congress in California's 49th district. She is a hard-working woman with an antiwar position on Iraq who needs support.
DAVID NICHOLSON

Crystal Lake, Ill.
■ Richard Auman, former mayor of Galena and our Democratic candidate from the 16th Congressional District, has said, "Our policy in Iraq is a huge failure." (The incumbent responded to our letter protesting the war with a thank-you note for our *support* of the war!) It is critical that we change the face of Congress next November. CAROLYN QUINN
LYNDA DIGREGOR, JOHN DARGER

Castle Rock, Colo.
■ I am running for Congress in Colorado's 6th Congressional District (www.winterforcongress.com). I have a total of ten years of service with the Marine Corps and the Navy. When I was 17, and again when I was 24, I swore an oath to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic. I believe that I am still bound by that oath, and I believe that our Constitution is under attack now more than any other time in my life. I believe that the majority of people in District 6 want some kind of rational plan to bring an end to the war in Iraq so that no more of our sons and daughters have to die for a flawed policy that does not make us safer! BILL WINTER

Biddeford, Me.
■ Here in Maine we have a progressive, pro-peace candidate, Jean Hay Bright, running a grassroots campaign against Olympia Snowe for her Senate seat. Snowe, despite a reputation as a moderate, has consistently supported the Bush war. Jean is pro-peace, anti-torture, anti–surrendering our rights to government fearmongering and for taking back the country (www.jeanhaybright.us). And thank you for *your* work to save our country.
KATHLEEN HACKER

Takoma Park, Md.
■ I write not only as a candidate for the US Senate from Maryland who is making opposition to the war a central plank of my campaign but also as an antiwar activist who directs democracyrising.us. Now an even clearer stance is needed. Democrats like Senators Biden and Obama are calling for a gradual withdrawal that leaves 100,000 troops in Iraq after the 2006 election. Now the Bush Administration is saying that the Biden plan mirrors its plan. When "national security Democrats" and the Bush Administration agree, we'd better watch carefully. The leverage of the antiwar movement is the 2006 elections. We must continue to build pressure for complete withdrawal in 2006. John Murtha's six-month exit strategy is right on target—our position for more than a year (www.kevinzeese.com). KEVIN ZEESE

Warsaw, Ind.
■ I stand with you 100 percent. My husband and I are the county chair and vice chair of the Democratic Party, and in the past few months we've threatened to resign on numerous occasions. I keep giving our leaders the benefit of the doubt that they will remove their thumbs from their mouths, put their blankies down, crawl out from under the bed and stand up and fight. So far, it's only been a fantasy. This is the prime time for them to fight like hell to get us out of Iraq, with public support for the war at an all-time low. D. COLLEEN PARKER

Pullman, Wash.
■ The right wants to "stay the course," a policy that would compound the mistakes and crimes already committed. But the left seems to want to let those crimes stand. The first position is an abomination; the second is an abdication. Our misguided Iraq policy means that we will have to be involved in Iraqi affairs for years to come. Mitigating the damage inflicted by American imperialism ought not be any easier than its continuation. STEVE KALE

Indianapolis
■ I suggest that you also withhold support for any candidate who voted for invading Iraq in the first place. They were either stupid to be fooled by rhetoric and bluster that certainly didn't fool me, or they were complicit in the Bush conspiracy to go to war. The alternative is worse: They weren't fooled, they weren't accomplices, they cynically went along for political gain. Is *that* the sort we want in office?
BRYAN J. MALONEY

Monterey, Calif.
■ No candidate will have my support unless he or she supports ending the war. Thanks for being there all along. MICHAEL REVELES

Cave Creek, Ariz.
■ I support your call for a speedy end to the war of choice. Politicians who support Bush's "stay the course" strategy only do grave harm to our nation. JOHN SCOTT

Fort Worth, Tex.
■ Your editorial is exactly what I, a Navy vet and active Democrat, have felt should be the core message of my party for far too long. It's time to wake up and smell the coffee, Democrats. It is not only the economy that has suffered but, more important, IT'S OUR NATIONAL SECURITY, STUPID! DOYLE C. FINE II

Fairfax, Va.
■ As a war veteran, I say now is the time to honor the dead, heal the wounded and end the Iraq War. Now is also the time to read our Constitution and for Americans to discuss the causes and consequences of the war in public places—everywhere from coffee shops to City Council meetings to Congress and the press. And we must assist our nation's returning veterans—and distinguish between the honorable warrior and the catastrophic Iraq War started by reactionary leaders. PAUL SULLIVAN

Gulfport, Fla.
■ As a decorated Vietnam combat veteran, I hope the morons posing as leaders of the Democratic Party will read this editorial. Hillary and the other clowns need to know that their stance on the war and the continuing exploitation of whole populations is unacceptable to thinking Americans. Give 'em hell. Better that than votes. Peace, RICHARD DE BERRY
St. Pete for Peace / Veterans for Peace

Glenmora, La.
■ A pox on both the Democans and the Republicrats. They are just two sides of the same damn coin. We the people need to reclaim *our* government. Just some thoughts from a former marine and Vietnam veteran. *Semper fi* and peace to *all* human beings on this small planet. CHARLIE EHLEN

New York City
■ Bravo! Words and fervent editorials are great. How about *The Nation* taking the lead in formulating an action plan, putting together a coalition of activists who will carry the torch in tearing down the war machine before the whole world turns against us?
PLEASE LEAD. WE WILL FOLLOW.
I. MEYER PINCUS

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Middlemarch

EYAL PRESS

OFF CENTER: The Republican Revolution and the Erosion of American Democracy.
By Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson.
Yale. 261 pp. $25.

DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS.
By Michael J. Graetz and Ian Shapiro.
Princeton. 372 pp. $29.95.

STAND UP FIGHT BACK: Republican Toughs, Democratic Wimps, and the Politics of Revenge.
By E.J. Dionne Jr.
Simon and Schuster. 243 pp. $24.

THE SURVIVOR: Bill Clinton in the White House.
By John F. Harris.
Random House. 504 pp. $29.95.

Something strange has happened in the year since conservatives celebrated the re-election of George W. Bush. The Republican Party, free at last to run the country as it sees fit, is fast becoming an object of popular loathing. First came the Bush Administration's plan to privatize Social Security, which sparked unease in the red and blue states alike. Then came the GOP's intervention in the Terri Schiavo case, which three-fourths of Americans deemed inappropriate. There was the threat to "go nuclear" in order to insure Democrats wouldn't filibuster right-wing judicial nominees, withdrawn after it became clear the public didn't appreciate such talk. And we haven't mentioned Iraq, "Scooter" Libby or Hurricane Katrina yet. In an October poll, six in ten Americans said President Bush does not share their priorities; well over half now believe the Iraq War was a mistake; fewer than one-third feel the nation is on the right track.

It's enough to make you think that losing the 2004 presidential election was the best thing that could have happened to the Democrats. Why, then, does the prospect of a bold liberal resurgence seem so farfetched? Why, even as Bush's approval ratings plunge to record lows and charges of ethical misconduct hover over figures like Bill Frist and Tom DeLay, do the Democrats appear so feckless? Why is it all too easy to imagine the GOP riding out its recent troubles and holding on to power in the midterm elections next year?

In their new book, *Off Center*, political scientists Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson argue that the answer, at least to the last of these questions, rests in the emergence of a Republican political machine that has managed to undermine and subvert the mechanisms of accountability in our democracy. Like many pundits and political commentators, Hacker and Pierson take as their starting point the conventional assumption that in American politics the balance of power lies in the center—with the so-called swing voters, whom both parties assiduously courted last year and who, in a closely divided electorate, ought to be able to prevent politicians on either side from drifting too far to the extremes.

Bush's numbers are down; GOP bigwigs are in legal trouble. So why does the prospect of a bold liberal resurgence seem so unlikely?

The recent behavior of the Democrats, at least, bears the maxim out. The party's leaders get anxious when anyone so much as utters a word that might be perceived as veering too far to the left. If the Republicans are upbraiding anyone in their ranks, by contrast, it's for signs of moderation. Again and again in recent years, Hacker and Pierson show, the GOP has enacted policies—assaults on workplace health and safety regulations; tax cuts that overwhelmingly benefit the rich; the rollback of environmental laws—whose thrust is unabashedly radical. Despite commanding razor-thin majorities, Republicans have pursued an agenda that caters to their increasingly right-wing base without paying a political price. They have gotten away with this not because America has grown rabidly conservative—in fact, as Hacker

Eyal Press is a Nation *contributing writer. His first book,* Absolute Convictions: My Father, a City, and the Conflict That Divided America, *will be published by Holt this spring.*

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and Pierson demonstrate through polling data, a majority of citizens oppose the GOP's agenda on everything from the environment to Social Security to the minimum wage—but because the bonds between ordinary voters and elected officials have grown increasingly frayed.

Some of the developments Hacker and Pierson document to buttress this claim—rule changes in Congress that have centralized power in the hands of reactionaries like Tom DeLay; policy shifts achieved through executive orders that slip below the media's radar; legislation written behind closed doors with no public debate—will be familiar enough to readers of this magazine. What is new is the connection the authors draw between the machinations of a fiercely determined Republican elite and the erosion of our civic institutions. On the one hand, they note, the institutions that are supposed to help citizens stay abreast of what elected officials are doing—"traditional news organizations, widespread voluntary organizations...locally grounded political parties"—have grown increasingly anemic. On the other, Republican elites "craft rhetoric and policies to make it difficult for even the well informed to know what is going on." Tax cuts are thus front-loaded with provisions that aid middle-income families, while the benefits to multimillionaires are disguised and delayed. Massive corporate giveaways are woven into legislation on issues (prescription drug legislation, an energy plan) the public generally wants the government to take action on. If you are highly educated and have enough free time on your hands, sorting through the details to determine exactly who the winners and losers are is certainly possible. But lots of people don't, and given the media's growing fixation on drama and brevity, even those who make a sustained effort might remain unapprised. Consider Bush's 2001 tax cut, arguably the most important piece of domestic legislation of the past five years. Hacker and Pierson were among a team of researchers who examined every story that ran in the nation's top-circulation daily, *USA Today*, on the issue in 2001. Of the seventy-eight articles that appeared, the vast majority examined the politics surrounding the plan, a mere six focused on its contents and only one looked at its distributional effects. The results were not much better in the *New York Times*, where just seven stories explored the distributional effects.

It is hard to read *Off Center* without concluding that the capacity of political elites to manipulate public perception has come to overwhelm the ability of the average overworked, infotainment-saturated citizen to understand what is being done in his or her name, a depressing thought when one considers that democracy can't really function without an informed citizenry. But is deception the main reason our politics has veered off center? It's not as though Karl Rove and Tom DeLay invented lying and manipulation, after all. Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger were equally skilled practitioners of the craft and no less Machiavellian. Of course, back in Nixon's day the Republican Party still had a substantial number of moderates in its ranks. There were also plenty of Democrats around who didn't automatically roll over when conservatives tried to bully them. A striking thing about the litany of radical legislation catalogued in *Off Center*, from tax cuts to the energy plan, is how frequently Democrats in Congress caved in or went along, something Hacker and Pierson acknowledge but play down in their analysis. Their book offers one of the more original and thought-provoking takes on American politics in recent years. But the disparity they highlight between what voters say they want and what the GOP gives them is not due solely to zealots like DeLay; equally important has been the absence of an opposition party willing to stand up and fight for an alternative.

If Republican lies and manipulation work, it's because there's no opposition party willing to stand up and fight for an alternative.

The story Michael Graetz and Ian Shapiro tell in their recent book, *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, vividly illustrates the problem. Graetz, a law professor at Yale University, and Shapiro, a political scientist at Yale, set out to unravel what on the surface appears a mystery: how the drive to repeal the estate tax, a measure that affects just 1 to 2 percent of the population and that is paid predominantly by the superrich, fueled a grassroots campaign that ended up throwing Democrats on the defensive. In a typical year the estate tax brought in enough revenue to fund one-half of the spending of the Department of Homeland Security or of the Education Department, or twice the amount of money spent on Pell grants (the largest federal program to help nonwealthy students attend college). It was, in other words, a tax the vast majority of Americans had a vested interest in keeping on the books, a point the Democrats should have had an easy time making.

Why didn't they? The simple explanation is that Republicans employed deception, renaming the estate tax the "death tax" to make it sound like something that affected everyone and trotting out people like Chester Thigpen, an African-American tree farmer from Mississippi and a grandson of slaves. (Not for the first time, color-blind Republicans managed to recover their vision when trying to put one over on Americans.) In 1995 Thigpen testified before Congress about how the estate tax was going to rob his family of the American dream. "We...want to leave the Tree Farm in our family," he explained. "We're not rich people." His story was promptly featured in a Heritage Foundation report, "Death Tax Devastation: Horror Stories from Middle-Class America." One detail not mentioned is that Thigpen didn't actually come to Washington on his own initiative or write his testimony—he was recruited by a man named Jim Martin, a GOP activist and Bush supporter who heads a seniors organization that was pushing for estate-tax repeal. Also omitted was that Thigpen's estate was not, in fact, taxable—he really wasn't rich, and so, as with the vast majority of family farmers and small-business owners, the measure wasn't going to cost him a nickel.

Even so, Graetz and Shapiro make a convincing case that propaganda was not the chief reason the campaign to repeal the estate tax gathered steam. A far more important factor was that throughout the 1990s, the only people in Washington making impassioned moral arguments about it were antitax conservatives, a committed network of true believers determined to convince Americans that it was wrong on principle for the government to tax anybody's assets when they died. Had there been voices on the other side arguing that levying a tax on inherited wealth in a nation where people pride themselves on self-reliance is both right and fair, the passion and energy of the repeal forces might have been neutralized. But there weren't. Democrats for the most part ignored the issue. When they finally got around to thinking about it, they weren't sure what their position should be, let alone how to frame it in compelling moral language. Not surprisingly, they were easily outmatched. "Talking to the strategists from both sides," write Graetz and Shapiro, "left the indelible impression that the Democrats facing the repealers were like the Yale football team trying to take on Ohio State."

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This is what happens in politics when one side makes clear what it is fighting for and the other side does not, a seemingly self-evident point that has somehow been lost on the Democratic Party's leading strategists. Again and again during the 2004 presidential campaign, the swing voters so coveted by the Kerry campaign told pollsters and reporters that while they weren't crazy about Bush, at least they knew where he stood and what he believed. Even Kerry's most ardent supporters were hard-pressed to say this about him. The effort to tar Kerry as a "flip-flopper" worked in part because on issues like Iraq, eyes glued to the polls, this is exactly what he was.

Recent defeats have fostered nostalgia for Bill Clinton, but his legacy is something Democrats urgently need to shed, not embrace.

In fairness, the problem isn't Kerry's alone. As *Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne Jr. notes in *Stand Up Fight Back*, the Democrats have become a party whose members define their identity by telling voters what they are not: "We're not tax-and-spend liberals, we're not weak on defense, we're not soft on crime, we're not feckless on family values." The mere hint of a set of affirmative values—standing up for shareholders against corporate criminals, say, or insisting that every American should have access to affordable healthcare and a college education, or expressing indignation at the scandal of poverty in the world's wealthiest nation—has generally been avoided. It's no wonder that, in light of this, many people nod their heads when Republicans tell them the GOP alone stands for clear values. And it's no mystery why, in the absence of a vigorous case for something different, Democrats constantly find themselves reacting to what the other side proposes.

"What if progressives were to become bolder—and more candid—about the philosophy behind their ideas?" Dionne asks. The party's more timid consultants never seem to tire of warning that such an approach risks alienating the moderate middle. It is a reflex rooted in fear, but also in the shadow cast over the party by the last Democrat to have succeeded on the national stage. It is a sign of how desperate liberals have grown that the losing streak they have been on lately, combined with the sense that they are invariably being outsmarted by tougher and more politically savvy conservatives, has fueled nostalgia for Bill Clinton. Then again, perhaps such nostalgia is inevitable in a party that has put up the charisma-challenged Kerry and Al Gore in the last two presidential elections. For all his faults, Clinton was an undeniably gifted politician with a natural ability to telegraph empathy and to parse issues in a manner that appeased his supporters and frustrated his foes. It is hard to read John Harris's recent biography of the ex-President, aptly titled *The Survivor*, and not come away impressed by Clinton's ability to stay on his feet. Unlike Gore and Kerry, Clinton took the GOP's best punches and didn't fall to the mat. Like Ali in the Rumble in the Jungle, he did the rope-a-dope, absorbing his enemies' harshest blows and then, just when he looked to be finished, striking back with some combinations of his own.

The "Man from Hope" made liberals feel like winners again. Watching Clinton deliver a speech at the Democratic National Convention last year, it was possible to imagine that Kerry might defeat Bush. And yet, paradoxically, Clinton's legacy and example is something the Democrats urgently need to shed, not embrace. For it is from Clinton that the party's leaders inherited some of their most debilitating traits: the obsessive fixation on polls (mined in a desperate effort to predict what the public wants them to say); the elevation of expediency over principle; the search for compromise in a tug of war with an opponent that has made no secret of its desire to quash them at every turn. Again and again during his two terms in office, Clinton neutralized his conservative critics by co-opting their ideas and blurring the distinction between himself and them. Many people looking back believe this was smart politics. But any honest assessment must reckon with the costs. As Harris notes, Clinton's two major achievements—reforming welfare and balancing the budget—were conservative goals. In announcing that the era of big government was over, he was reading from a script written by the right. Clinton was a brilliant politician but a terrible party leader. His personal survival came, it appears increasingly clear over time, at the Democrats' collective expense.

Harris tells a story about an event in the spring of 1995 that ought to dampen the enthusiasm of anyone dreaming that in 2008 Hillary will restore the pride of liberalism by carrying on her husband's legacy. It was the fiftieth anniversary of Franklin Roosevelt's death and, at the cottage in Warm Springs, Georgia, where the architect of the New Deal had died, Clinton held forth, telling the audience that FDR would have supported his efforts to cooperate with Republicans, reform the welfare system and make incremental progressive change. In the audience were Arthur Schlesinger Jr., author of an acclaimed three-volume history of the New Deal, and John Kenneth Galbraith, who served in Roosevelt's Administration. They were not persuaded. In the next morning's *Washington Post*, Galbraith quipped, "FDR enjoyed his enemies. I'd like to see Bill Clinton enjoy them more." Schlesinger noted that Roosevelt "loved a good fight," whereas Clinton "seems by temperament an accommodator." When Clinton read the article he was furious, and responded by doing the quintessential Clintonian thing—inviting Schlesinger, Galbraith and other prominent liberals to a seafood luncheon, where he turned on the charm and told them he was looking forward to using his veto pen in the period ahead. "I think all of us were both impressed and disarmed," Schlesinger wrote in his journal that night. "I also think we all felt that if he acts the way he talked, things would improve—but still wonder about the 'if.'"

Bill Clinton is no longer around. And there is some evidence—the recent maneuver by Senate Democrats to force Republicans into a closed session over the failure to investigate prewar intelligence, for example—that the GOP's plummeting fortunes have begun to swing the balance of power in Washington. Although they control every branch of the government, Republicans have had to retreat from some of their top priorities lately, such as making repeal of the estate tax permanent, and have had no luck preventing the American people from believing they were lied to about Iraq. You can fool some people some of the time, it appears, but even the Rove-led GOP can't fool all of them all of the time.

Strikingly, however, the Democrats still appear unable—or unwilling—to seize the moment and explain how they would govern the country differently. They bemoan the phenomenon of working-class voters getting suckered into voting for the GOP yet shy away from embracing a populist economic agenda that might win back their allegiance. They criticize the Bush Administration for leading America into a disastrous war yet refrain from issuing a unified call for withdrawal (when Pennsylvania Representative John Murtha recently did just that, Democrats from Hillary Clin-

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ton to John Kerry scrambled to distance themselves from his remarks). Perhaps this is why, in a recent Pew Research Center poll, while the voters said they trusted the Democrats more on a wide range of issues, the party's approval ratings were no better than the Republicans', with discontent particularly strong among their own usual supporters. Sixty-three percent of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents believe "the party is doing only a fair or a poor job standing up for its traditional positions on such things as protecting the interests of minorities, helping the poor and needy, and representing working people." Until this changes, there will be no reason to believe that the Republican Party's recent problems will have a lasting effect. And, for all the flaws and contortions in our political culture and system of representative government, the Democrats will have nobody but themselves to blame. ■

The Oceanic Feeling

CLAIRE MESSUD

THE SEA. By John Banville. Knopf. 195 pp. $23.

A Banville novel is, by now, a recognizable entity, and a Banville protagonist's speech is tinged not only with the inflections of Joyce, Beckett and Nabokov but also with the echoes of other Banville protagonists. They are a fiercely articulate, cold-hearted, sullied lot, these men, mired in loss and loathing, baffled by their own detachment, by their dark hearts. Whether guilty of murder or of espionage, or merely of complex and willful deceptions, Banville's creations live at least double lives. They give the lie to any notion of a coherent self, even as they promote, or appear to, the myth of such a thing.

Max Morden, the narrator of *The Sea*, Banville's new novel (winner of this year's Man Booker Prize), sits comfortably in the company of such rogues as Axel Vander (*Shroud*), Victor Maskell (*The Untouchable*), Freddie Montgomery (*The Book of Evidence*) and Alexander Cleave (*Eclipse*). Like most of them, he is aging, solitary, a drinker, culturally sophisticated and slightly fussy. Many of Banville's men are more moved by art than by people—Montgomery, in *The Book of Evidence*, to the point of murder—and Morden, for his part, is at work on a monograph on Bonnard. Like his fictional fellows, he bears the hidden imprint of a shadowy and socially disappointing parent (when he first took his future wife to meet his mother, "Ma was living in a flat by the canal, a dim, low place that smelled of her landlady's cats") and chiefly the burden of not wanting to be who he is. He might be speaking for any Banvillean when he reveals, "From earliest days I wanted to be someone else...I never had a personality, not in the way that others have, or think they have. I was always a distinct no-one, whose fiercest wish was to be an indistinct someone." Zelig-like, secretive, careful, aspirant—these are the men who populate Banville's imagination.

For all this, Max Morden differs, somewhat, from his predecessors. Recently widowed (or, as he puts it, "widowered"), he has retreated into memory, the memory of a relatively satisfied life. He recalls both the myth and the reality of his wife, Anna, with considerable tenderness (although he regards his daughter Claire from a cheerfully brutal remove: Banville's men aren't big on fathering). From the diagnosis of Anna's cancer through her death, he records in intermittent, vivid bursts the last year of their life together, as well as their meeting, and her significance to him as a liberator of his soul: "What Anna proposed to me, there in the dusty summer dusk on the corner of Sloane Street, was not so much marriage as the chance to fulfill the fantasy of myself." (Anna is treated, incidentally, by a doctor whose significant surname, Todd, strikes Max powerfully, even as the echoes of his own apparently do not.) Largely measured, mournful but contained, Max reveals in a single particularly vehement burst the force of his emotion in the face of his loss: "You cunt, you fucking cunt, how could you go and leave me like this, floundering in my own foulness, with no one to save me from myself. *How could you.*"

His is the raging grief of a man whose identity was altered, or completed, by his wife, a man who sees himself now as "a person of scant talent and scanter ambition, greyed o'er by the years, uncertain and astray and in need of consolation and the brief respite of drink-induced oblivion." And his response, after Anna's death—in addition to a fair amount of drinking—is to unearth, with willful sorrow, the self he was before Anna, before adulthood, to rediscover the time and situation that were "the true origin in me of self-consciousness." It is a self, of course, that has never really left him: "The past," he notes at the outset of the book, "beats inside me like a second heart." The novel, then, sitting only tentatively in the present, is above all the intertwined tale of two pasts: Max's assemblage of the fragments of his lost marriage and his reliving of the childhood summer, on the cusp of adolescence, when he first fell in love.

In his solitude, Max has regained the seaside village (here called Ballyless) where his childhood summers were spent. He has taken a room at the Cedars, a villa formerly inhabited by the dangerously glamorous Grace family, now run as a boarding house by the elegant and enigmatic spinster Miss Vavasour. Her only other lodger is Colonel Blunden, a man whose attentions to the landlady suggest a romantic interest, and whose claim to the title of "Colonel" strikes Max as particularly suspect: "He has the glazed flawlessness of an actor who has been playing the same part for too long.... He does a good job of hiding his Belfast accent but hints of it keep escaping, like trapped wind." Max Morden, if anyone, ought to know: The year he met the Graces, he ascended to their social stratosphere from a far humbler realm, even though "the social structure of our summer world was as fixed and hard of climbing as a ziggurat." Transformed by a lifetime married to Anna Weiss, he nevertheless retains memories of the rented chalet, "a slightly less than life-sized wooden model of a house" and of his modest, quarrelsome parents, his mother in a "crimplene swimsuit, mouse-pink, with a coy little hem stretched across tight just below the crotch. Her face looked bare and defenceless, pinched in the tight rubber seal of her bathing cap." Needless to say, this mother could not swim.

Likened by a British reviewer to Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, *The Sea* is certainly an open hymn to the lost life. Its theme may be more nakedly addressed, but it is no more fervently undertaken than in several of Banville's other novels: He is a writer profoundly concerned with the way we live in and with what is gone, the way things and places live on without us,

Claire Messud's most recent book is The Hunters *(Harvest), a pair of novellas.*

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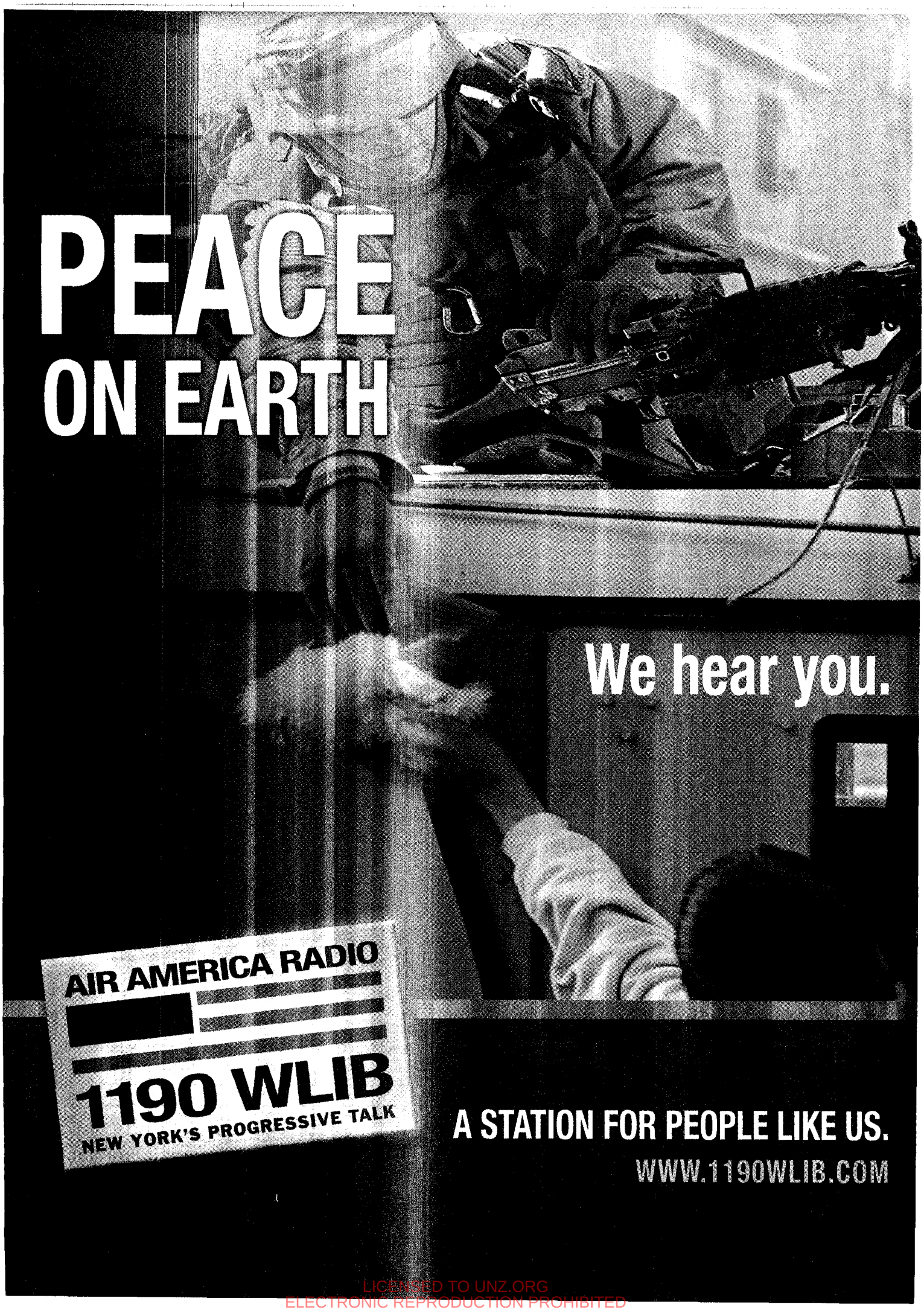

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the highly emotional relation between the selves that look back now and the selves we were then. As Max asks, recalling the alluring Mrs. Connie Grace sprawled at a picnic many years before, "Which is the more real, the woman reclining on the grassy bank of my recollections, or the strew of dust and dried marrow that is all the earth any longer retains of her?"

Connie was Max's first love. As a boy of 10 or 11, he saw in her a near-divine glory—"In those days I was greatly taken with the gods.... Or the idea of the gods, that is, the possibility of the gods"—even as he could clearly make out her indifferent humanity: "She was rather stocky, and her hands were fat and reddish, there was a bump at the tip of her nose.... She smelled of sweat and cold cream and, faintly, of cooking fat. Just another woman, in other words, and another mother at that. Yet to me she was in all her ordinariness as remote and remotely desirable as any a painted pale lady with unicorn and book." Excited by her social elevation, her sensuality and in no small part by her slightly Satanic husband, Carlo ("I think now that it was from Carlo Grace I first derived the notion that I was in the presence of the gods...he was the one who appeared to be in command over us all, a laughing deity, the Poseidon of our summer"), the young Max also finds compelling playmates in the Grace children, twins named Chloe and Myles.

Inevitably, his attention turns from mother to daughter: He abandons the aging Connie for Chloe: "Yes, I was falling in love with Chloe—had fallen, the thing was done already. I had that sense of anxious euphoria, of happy, helpless toppling, which the one who knows he will have to do the loving always feels, at the precipitous outset. For even at such a tender age I knew that there is always a lover and a loved, and knew which one, in this case, I would be." Theirs may initially seem a typical adolescent romance of furtive gropings and murky passions, but in light of one dramatic afternoon, "the day of the strange tide," it is instead crystallized into something mythic. Following a silent sexual encounter between Max and Chloe in a beach hut, with Myles creepily looking on, Chloe and Myles turn tail and embark upon a mystifying apparent suicide. They are thereby forever inscribed in the roster of the divine, and Max is left, uncomprehending, in the company of the children's nanny, Rose—known as "poor Rosie"—to try to understand what selfhood, sex and mortality might, together, signify. Even after all these years—after a life lived in the face of his momentous loss—it is to this first abandonment that he returns, only to find that while Miss Vavasour protests that "I can't help you.... You must know that," the sea itself remains, and beckons, and holds, perhaps, or is, the answer.

Banville is a highly literary novelist, in all senses: His diction is elaborate, often abstruse, notwithstanding his contention that "there is not a sentence anywhere in my work which, in terms of syntax, grammar and vocabulary, would not be understood by an eight-year-old equipped with a dictionary." His characters, even as they confront life's central passions and fears (self–lessness and death often chief among them), do so upon a severely constrained and stylized stage, from which the clutter of the everyday has been painstakingly removed. And in this instance, Max's encounter with the godlike Graces and the fates that befall them, have more literary or dramatic urgency than actual resonance. What happens in this strand of the novel—the suicide in particular—happens not because it would ever, in life as we know it, happen, but because the story and its import require it. Chloe and Myles, as godlings should be, are inseparable, and intense, and their unspoken communications simultaneously attract and repel their friend: "How would it be? Like having one mind and two bodies? If so it was almost disgusting to think of.... How, how would it be? I itched to know." They are known above all by their signs: Myles has webbed feet and, more portentously, is mute; Chloe, imperious and devil-may-care, is his conduit to the world. They are more significant than real.

Freud might have liked this novel, impregnated as it is with sex, death, water and memory. *The Sea* is, for those (like myself) with a high tolerance for the literary, a richly intriguing book. Banville is one of our pre-eminent stylists, and despite the odd precious locution ("A dream it was that drew me here") this novel is impeccably written, in a prose that is like an intricate and glorious spider's web, imbued with vivid detail (as when Carlo Grace struggles to open a bottle of wine at the picnic: "Mr. Grace clamped the wine bottle between his knees and strained and strained, his earlobes turning red") and laced with black humor ("The tea-bag is a vile invention, suggestive to my perhaps overly squeamish eye of something a careless person might leave behind unflushed in the lavatory").

It seems churlish, then, to quibble with so accomplished a rendition, a novel that confronts—as all of Banville's novels do—life's elemental concerns, and does so with such unstinting rigor. But perhaps that is exactly what unsettles: the rigor that gives Myles his webbed feet, and him and Chloe their unspoken communion, the rigor that makes them act as they do on the day of the strange tide. Max Morden is confused by their behavior, uncertain to the last whether his friends are divine or not; but I, who don't share his delusion, and who spend a lot of time observing how people act, can find no earthly explanation for their behavior. It makes sense only because the novel requires it; and for this reader, that is not sufficient cause. This climax casts, then, a shadow, or perhaps a light, upon the entire narrative. If Colonel Blunden has "the glazed flawlessness of an actor," and if the young woman who answers the former dairyman's door gives "the impression of a young actress elaborately but not quite convincingly made up to look old," then there is, too, about Max and his account an element of theater, a self-consciousness so thorough that we have ultimately nothing but the looking glass itself.

This makes sense, of course, given that Max is a man who has always wished himself other, a man for whom, with the realization of Chloe's existence ("no one had yet been real in the way that Chloe was"), came the concomitant acknowledgment of his own ("And if she was real, so, suddenly, was I"). If he has remained ultimately uncertain somehow of his own reality, then it is fitting that we should remain uncertain of hers. Nevertheless, it is unnerving to feel even fleetingly that this life—this novel—is all stage lights and greasepaint, that in the end everyone—not just Max but Chloe, and perhaps Anna, too—is a blundering, fake Colonel Blunden.

Yet there is so much in *The Sea* that isn't artifice, that is the painstaking record of memory, grief and loss. Max laments not only the loss of Anna, and of his childhood playmates, but the loss of his selves, and of possibility, and of childhood itself. As he observes, most truly and most painfully, "Happiness was different in childhood. It was so much then a matter simply of accumulation, of taking things—new experiences, new emotions—and applying them like so many polished tiles to what would someday be the marvelously finished pavilion of the self. And incredulity, that too was a large part of being happy, I mean, that euphoric inability to believe one's simple luck." Banville's novel is remarkable in the end not for what it says, self-consciously, about life's great themes but for what it knows, and richly conveys, about what it is to be alive, while continuously experiencing loss. ■

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NYU NEGOTIATE

To: President John Sexton, New York University

We, the faculty from several universities in the United States and abroad, write to express our objections to the New York University administration's efforts to defeat the graduate student union and retaliate against those who have initiated and sustained the current strike. The union in question was clearly instated on the basis of a fair election which then obligated New York University to negotiate with the appointed representatives in a fair and open manner. Although the NLRB in 2005 released the university from its obligations to recognize the union, it did not authorize retaliatory action on the part of the university. The recent actions of your office, now widely publicized, defy all protocols of civility and fairness and herald a bellicose approach to the union and its demands for fair wages, decent health care, and provisional job security.

As we all know, there may be differences of opinion on how best to formulate policies that would address these various issues, but undermining the union itself is nothing more than Reagan-esque union-busting and so conveys and enacts hostility to student labor that can only heighten conflict and circulate a ruinous image for New York University as an unfair and indecent place of employment. The infiltration of student and faculty email constitutes an unauthorized invasion of privacy. And the most recent threat to rescind funding for students engaged in the strike constitutes an abhorrent form of coercion.

We urge you to enter into negotiations with the union and to find civil, legal, and productive ways of resolving whatever issues of employment exist between these two parties.

Sincerely,

Judith Butler
Maxine Elliot Professor, University of California, Berkeley

Fredric Jameson
William A. Lane Professor of Comparative Literature and Romance Studies, Duke University

Joan W. Scott
Harold F. Linder Professer of Social Science, Institute for Advanced Study

Talal Asad
Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, City University of New York

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak
Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities, Columbia University

Paul Gilroy
Anthony Giddens Professors of Social Theory, London School of Economics

Donna Haraway
Professor of History of Consciousness, University of California at Santa Cruz

Slavoj Zizek
Co-Director, International Center for Humanities, Birkbeck College, University of London

Etienne Balibar
Professeur émérite, Université de Paris X Nanterre
Distinguished Professor of Humanities, University of California, Irvine

Hayden White
Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature, Stanford University
Professor Emeritus History of Consciousness, University of California at Santa Cruz

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Farewell to the Working Class

AUTHOR AUSTIN KELLEY

HOW TO BE IDLE.
By Tom Hodgkinson. HarperCollins. 286 pp. $18.95.

BONJOUR LAZINESS: Jumping Off the Corporate Ladder.
By Corinne Maier. Pantheon. 137 pp. $16.95.

In 1883 Karl Marx's son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, was idling in a relatively luxurious political prison near the Latin Quarter of Paris. A Cuban-French socialist, he whiled away the days taking long lunches and discussing the evils of capitalism with his comrade and collaborator Jules Guesde, who happened to be staying in the next room. Lafargue's other prison pastimes included relaxing in the bathtub that had been delivered to his quarters (at Friedrich Engels's expense), practicing his German and, like any good nineteenth-century intellectual, revising his treatise—a pamphlet titled *The Right to Be Lazy*. Like most of his contemporary activists, he condemned the twelve-to-fourteen-hour factory workday, but unlike his father-in-law, he didn't just critique the conditions of labor—he went after labor itself. "In capitalist society," he wrote, "work is the cause of all intellectual degeneracy, of all organic deformity." Lafargue dismissed the "right to work" that other socialists demanded. He asked, instead, for the right to lie around on the daybed, the right to read and to nap, the right to feast and to make love. He declared the right to endless leisure.

In the past few years, Lafargue's philosophy has been vigorously renewed by writers on the other side of the Atlantic. Celebrations of leisure like Carl Honoré's *In Praise of Slowness*, John de Graaf's *Take Back Your Time* and Pat Kane's *The Play Ethic* have suggested that in the industrialized West we need a less hectic, more deliberate working life. In the past year two new guides to the lazy life, Tom Hodgkinson's *How to Be Idle* and Corinne Maier's *Bonjour Laziness: Jumping Off the Corporate Ladder*, have gone further, calling for a regime of revolutionary leisure in which the workforce stops being... well, a workforce. There is truly much ado about nothing here, and one must ask, Why are all these writers suddenly dedicating so much energy to indolence? Is it simply a reaction to the emerging EU and its official drive to compete with America and Asia? Or could laziness really be the key to peace, happiness and a more perfect world?

There is a substantial history of anti-work writing to draw on. Aristotle, for one, was no great fan of toil. In his *Politics*, he made it clear that ideal citizens should not be tradesmen, mechanics or farmers. "Such a life is ignoble, and inimical to virtue," he wrote. Instead, we must have plenty of free time and the independence to engage in social activity of our choosing. "The first principle of all action," Aristotle concluded, "is leisure." Others agreed. Cicero announced that "repose is an essential condition of happiness." Horace asked plaintively, "Why do we strive so hard in our brief lives for great possessions?"

By the time Lafargue was lounging, brandy snifter in hand, in the Sainte-Pélagie prison, the notion of striving had undergone a great shift. The elite leisure class still quoted Aristotle, thinking laziness a virtue; the Romantics and transcendentalists, meanwhile, wandered in the woods, complaining about the commerce that was tying everyone up. But the Reformation's infamous Protestant exhaustion ethic and the Industrial Revolution had altered our ideas about productivity and idleness in countless ways. Fleeing from the bustle of the busy life was a privilege of the rich, a marginal pursuit of the avant-garde or a brief, often arduous, vacation squeezed between long periods of respectable toil. For the working masses, it was forbidden fruit.

Lafargue, who was laid off by an insurance company and survived on Engels's largesse, wanted to democratize the leisure he enjoyed. He argued that the Old Testament God "gave his worshipers the supreme example of ideal laziness; after six days of work, he rests for all eternity." If each person pitched in for three hours a day, between naps and "juicy beefsteaks" and trips to the theater (in his utopian "regime of idleness," former politicians would be forced onto the stage), the world could produce everything it required—and more. Reducing the workday, he claimed, would in fact serve to increase productivity.

Lenin & Co. were not convinced, and the Soviets did not, in the end, institute sloth. But others carried the torch of radical leisure. In 1932 Englishman Bertrand Russell, feeling a bit more industrious than his French predecessor, argued for a four-hour workday. In the 1960s Raoul Vaneigem and his philosopher friends painted pro-laziness slogans ("Never Work") on Parisian walls. "The organization of work and the organization of leisure are the blades of the castrating shears whose job is to improve the race of fawning dogs," Vaneigem wrote. "One day, will we see strikers, demanding automation and a ten-hour week, choosing, instead of picketing, to make love in the factories, the offices and the culture centres?"

Spanish anarchists, Italian Marxists and American lunatics, throughout the twentieth century, called on the masses to stop working. Institutions, the thinking goes, need us to slave away at the office, at McDonald's, at the power plant. If we stop, then boom! No red tape. No burgers. No lights. Freedom! Yet despite their slogans and signs, somehow none of the pro-lazy constituency ever managed to organize millions to march into the indolent unknown.

France did institute a thirty-five-hour workweek, and other European countries offered long paid vacations (long, at least, compared with paltry American standards). But as 1960s idealism ebbed, so did the revolutionary politics of *paresse*. In the United States we work 20 percent more than we did in 1970; in Spain and Portugal, one can barely take an afternoon nap anymore. Even the Parisian workweek has died an ignoble death, slain by politicians' promises of increased productivity. In the battle over working hours and social services, the hours are winning and the services are losing.

In this climate, Tom Hodgkinson's *How to Be Idle* is a welcome cry for more time off. A young Englishman who edits a journal called *The Idler*, he is straightforward about his utopian aims: "I have a dream," he writes. "It is called love, anarchy, freedom. It is called being idle." Indebted to his forefathers, he quotes Paul Lafargue and Bertrand Russell at length. He even steals (as any slacker would) Lafargue's epigraph, from German philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: "Let us be lazy in everything, except in loving and drinking, except in being lazy." Such exceptions are the rule of the book. Hodgkinson insists

Austin Kelley, a freelance writer living in Brooklyn, recently earned a doctorate in English literature from Duke University.

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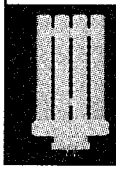

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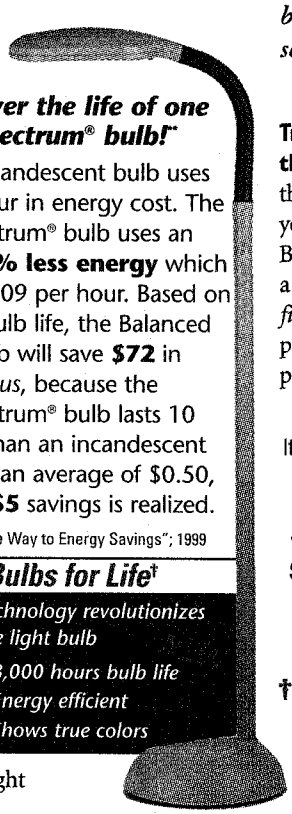

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that a commitment to leisure is essential to our spiritual and social well-being, and his enlightened state includes a strict regimen of sleeping and getting drunk.

How to Be Idle is more of an anecdotal self-help book (or anti-self-help book) than a sustained argument. "If you want health, wealth, and happiness, the first step is to throw away your alarm clocks!" Hodgkinson writes. Personal stories and friendly advice follow. He urges us to enjoy our hangovers (he assumes we are always hung over) and to drink tea and not coffee. "Coffee is for winners, go-getters, tea-ignorers, lunch-cancellers, early-risers, guilt-ridden strivers, money obsessives and status-driven spiritually empty lunatics." At one point he even tells us where to buy our furniture (thrift stores, auctions and, of course, eBay).

The book is stitched together loosely, with each chapter corresponding to an hour of the day ("3 p.m.: The Nap" and "2 a.m.: The Art of Conversation") and liberally sprinkled with the wisdom of a diverse crew of loafers, from Wilde and Nietzsche to Debbie Harry and Spinal Tap. He, like Lafargue, blames the captains of industry for sanctifying labor: "The great problem of the Industrial Revolution," he writes, "was how to transform a population of strong-willed, independent-minded, heavy-drinking, party-oriented, riot-loving, life-loving Englishmen into a docile, disciplined, grateful workforce."

Hodgkinson is most entertaining—and convincing—when he's on a tirade. He rails against Thomas Edison ("After Edison, the machines never rested"), celebrates long aimless walks ("The pedestrian is the highest and most mighty of beings....he wanders detached, wise and merry, godlike. He is free") and discourages readers from dousing symptoms with pharmaceuticals in order to carry on, still sick, with work. "Drug companies," he writes, "make vast profits out of magic beans which promise to deliver us from torment and return us to the desk." Hodgkinson would like instead to bring back the word "convalescence." He suggests that physicians should prescribe long periods of rest—anywhere from three days to two months—for minor illnesses. "Doctors, join us!" he writes. "I call on you! You are servants of the work ethic!"

He is on familiar terms with the figures of high culture he quotes. German critic Walter Benjamin is "one of the great literary Euro-slackers of the early twentieth century"; René Descartes, he tells us, was an incorrigible late-sleeper. When studying with the Jesuits, his tutors would douse him with buckets of cold water—to no effect. Hodgkinson wisely attributes Descartes's philosophical inventiveness to his time lying prone. "Laziness produced Cartesian duality," he writes. Then he adds, "I lie in bed thinking, therefore I am."

Corinne Maier's slim manifesto is a cross between Jacques Lacan and *Dilbert*, an abstract French psychoanalytic office cartoon. Her book is aimed at corporate life and the modern middle manager, whom she advises to slack off while keeping one foot on the office desk. "It's in your best interest," she writes, "to work as little as possible." (Maier herself works only a few hours a week.) This "active disengagement," she continues, will "undermine the system from within." Although *Bonjour Laziness* is peculiarly French (Maier's attacks on business language, which are largely assaults on imported Americanisms, may be lost in translation), many of the book's criticisms (CEO excesses, financial scandals) will be familiar to American cubicle dwellers and newspaper readers. If workers believe in their companies, she thinks, they are deluded. If they believe their jobs are secure, they are fools. And if they trust they can get ahead by working hard, they are certifiably insane.

Slackers of the world, unite! For the champions of idleness, organizing the workplace is passé, and napping is where it's at.

Maier's response is to drop out. She tells the office worker to pretend to be working but not to commit to anything. "Seek out the most useless positions: those in consultancy, appraisal, research, and study," she commands. The rise of freelancing and outsourcing has created a workforce to which companies are less responsible, so you should be less responsible to them. (About temporary workers, she writes, "treat them well: remember, they're the only ones who actually do any work.")

From bourgeois ennui to Starbucks jokes ("How does the world end? Not with a bang but with a Starbucks"), this is mostly well-worn territory. Like Hodgkinson, Maier is erudite but muddled, her book full of subheadings but no structure. Also like Hodgkinson, she relies on rhetorical excess to bring her ideas to life. About the managerial emphasis on flexibility, she writes, "To be always available for a long list of unlikely projects—half of which are completely idiotic, the other half ill-conceived—is a little like changing sexual partners twice a year. When you're twenty, the idea might have a certain charm; but over the years, frankly, it becomes a chore. The New Management is an erection on command."

Of course, one might object to all this lazy business. What if you have to work to feed your family, to stave off poverty or sickness, to afford necessities? What if (gasp!) you really like your job? In other words, who do these writers think they are talking to? Both Maier and Hodgkinson treat the reader as a friend, someone to tease and to instruct, someone who will understand them implicitly. This is a fun game, and I'd love to join them for a series of long lunches. (Considering Maier's sales figures, buoyed by a well-publicized battle with her employer, there might be a lot of people at the table.) On the other hand, maybe all we want to do, as readers, is to fantasize about a long lunch while chowing down a Power Bar and hurrying off to the gym. These books offer a bit of vicarious indiscretion to the worker bee or, more precisely, to the educated, upper-middle-class Barnes & Noble shopper. When they ask us to change our lives radically, they do so with offhand irony tucked under cheery cartoonish covers.

In this way, the authors distinguish themselves from the layabouts of the past. Our modern loungers have chosen book deals over communal action, even of the artistic kind. Hodgkinson, for one, divides the world into idlers and "botherers," those letter-writing, protest-marching busybodies who are always mucking things up. He is so hard-pressed to imagine desires other than his own pleasures that we don't find out he has a family until we are nearly done with the book. (Children, it seems, like prime ministers, are botherers.)

Maier is equally dismissive of social action, despite her Marxian rhetoric ("Nowadays each of us is an object of exchange, destined to be placed and displaced at the whim of the firm"). Arguing for political apathy, she writes, "Humanity never ceases repeating the same mistakes, with its red tape, its extremely mediocre leaders, and...its gallows." Toward the end of *Bonjour Laziness*, she presents us with an ideological choice: a belief in nationalized industries, strong unions and social welfare programs, or free markets and versatile globalism. The first is a dinosaur, based on "simpleminded egalitarianism" and a nostalgic, antiglobal ideal; the second masks cruelty in the guise of progress and democracy. Maier's response: "By refusing

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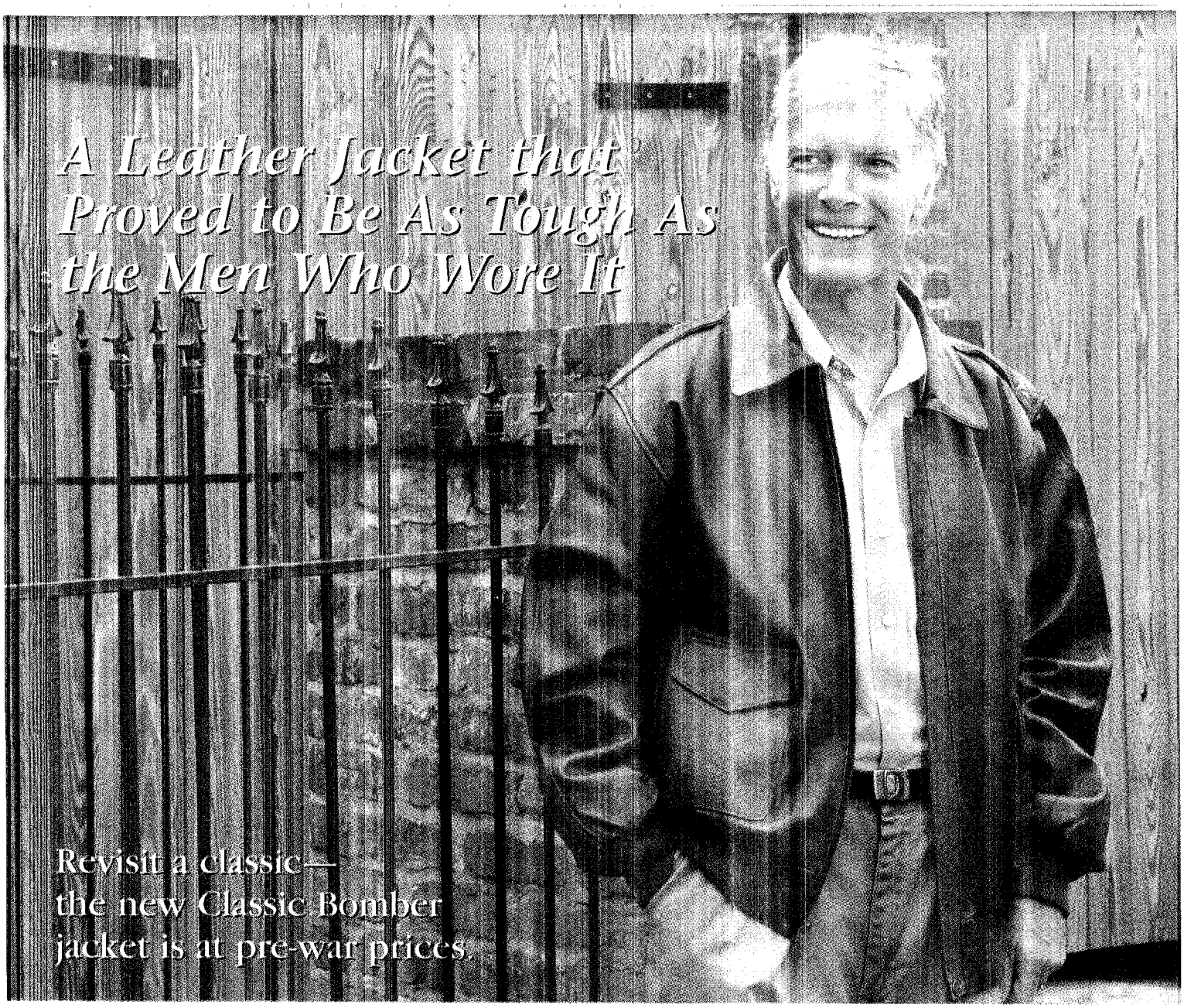

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to subscribe to either one, you can at least have the satisfaction of feeling intelligent." With all that time on her hands, she might have come up with something more appealing, or at least wittier. If Aristotle once thought leisure was necessary for political action, Maier seems to think it's only an expression of smug self-satisfaction.

This current crop of European idlers may not provide a template for a better, more leisurely democracy. Nor will they convince you to quit your job to pursue poetry or to dedicate yourself to the People's Coalition for the Ten-Hour Week. Still, they offer a dollop of rebellious pleasure and their own brands of earnest utopian thinking. And who knows? Maybe you'll put down their books, log on to eBay and buy yourself a daybed. If, as Hodgkinson writes, "the art of living is the art of bringing dreams and reality together," that's not such a bad start. ■

2005 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize

The Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize of $25,000, awarded annually for the most outstanding book of poems published in the United States by an American, is administered jointly by the Academy of American Poets and The Nation. *In the past decade, winners have been Donald Revell (2004), Eamon Grennan (2003), Madeline DeFrees (2002), Fanny Howe (2001), David Ferry (2000), Wanda Coleman (1999), Mark Jarman (1998), Robert Pinsky (1997), Charles Wright (1996) and Marilyn Hacker (1995). This year the award goes to Anne Winters for* The Displaced of Capital. *Jurors were Louise Glück, Alan Shapiro and Robert Pinsky, who contributed the following essay. Other finalists for the award were* Poems New & Selected, *by Marianne Boruch (Oberlin);* Strike Sparks: Selected Poems, 1980–2002, *by Sharon Olds (Knopf);* Don't Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric, *by Claudia Rankine (Graywolf);* New and Selected Poems, *by Michael Ryan (Houghton Mifflin); and* Door in the Mountain: New and Collected Poems, 1965–2003, *by Jean Valentine (Wesleyan).*

Anne Winters's *The Displaced of Capital*, this year's winner of the Lenore Marshall Award, is a polymath's symphony of praise and revulsion, for a specific city and for civilization itself. The book is about the partly visible, largely unknown conduits and systems that connect things: poverty and opera, the aisles of Home Depot and the oak owl that witnessed the roundup of Jews in the Cathedral of Ulm, the currency exchange and the tenement, geology and engineering, injustice and the transit system.

Winters is free from expected political poses but full of political ardor. She finds the perfect terrain for her subject, actual and symbolic, in the city of New York, with its surface grid of streets, the vertical compendium of its buildings and its underlying net of cables, pipes and tunnels. The city also flows and changes—"America's longest river" in "Night Wash," from Winters's earlier volume *The Key to the City*.

In a characteristic move, her poem "Cold-Water Flats" at its conclusion makes the river literal as well as figurative. It begins by calling up student days in the bygone Little Italy of Manhattan with a few swift lines, relishing the jangle of consonants that invoke the physical details—bulbs and tubs, the zinc-lidded and the amber-bellied, the courtly and the court and the chord:

> By the light of a dangling bulb, at their kitchen tables, the students
> grind at history, mathematics, courtly love…
> The zinc-lidded bathtubs in their kitchens swarm
> with gravid, amber-bellied roaches.
> Across the court, in a Met broadcast, Puccini
> fails to make one chord of twenty cold-water flats.

This is not local color or reminiscence, nor is it nostalgia or a moralistic lament for timeless poverty. The poet has a subject, and the subject has to do with the infinite, multiple layers of causality, suffering and accomplishment that underlie everything. The last cold-water flats in the city are just one human layer of the world's much laminated history, pressured and twisted by the forces of time.

For example, on a personal level, when the butcher sitting in front of his shop tips his cap, there is a story behind the gesture:

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Electricity: direct current. Water-closets
(unheated) at the ends of the hallways.
Each May,
the grandson himself comes by with a
white-papered can
for "The Bride of Saint Francis." I've
seen
the grandfather sweep his cash register
clean
for just such a can—for two plastic-
corded fratelli. He it was
chewed me out when I coolly bought
his "Ground Meat for Pets"
at ten cents a pound. Ever after I must
submit
to the complex folds of his frown, his
muse overweighing
of ground beef in shining carnets of
wax paper. And then
all summer he'll rise, one hand on his
sidewalk chair,
black-enameled, back-tilted among
the men's chairs as I pass
and touch his welt-seamed cap
not to me but to her

to *Donna Povertà!* barely tokened
in my ephemeral Village-poverty.

The end-rhymes "can/seen/clean" resemble the plastic belt cords of the monks or the black-enameled chair—pleasurable quick moments that compress what some kinds of narrative prose might prolong tediously.

More ambitious than mere narrative, concerned with more than that "ephemeral Village-poverty," the poem takes the "cold-water" of its title literally deeper:

...the super's wife
anathematizes the plumbing. Below me,
even deep
in winter, the just-audible trickle
of Minetta Creek, bricked over
a century ago.

This is the underground stream that stands for Winters's sense of live, unseen realities that flow beneath what we see. At street level, in the winter snow, in Minetta Lane named for that buried creek, we see "ochre columns of smoke from the garbage cans." And then, a concluding vision makes everything actually as well as symbolically deeper, yet also plainer:

...And in the walls, from taps
in the sink and the tub, cold water. Its
tang
of stone and metal, icy
at faucet-mouth, numbed lips,
unceasing arrival, the water

which later, I think, will seem to have
been
most precious—being useful, humble,
chaste.

The qualifications of "I think" and "will seem" temper the positive adjectives of the final line, make the gratitude for water and the wonder at it a little more tentative and reserved. But the qualifying, tentative phrases also reflect an important quality of skepticism in Winters's ambition: She reaches far, and undertakes large expanses, partly in order to convey the limitations of what can be known.

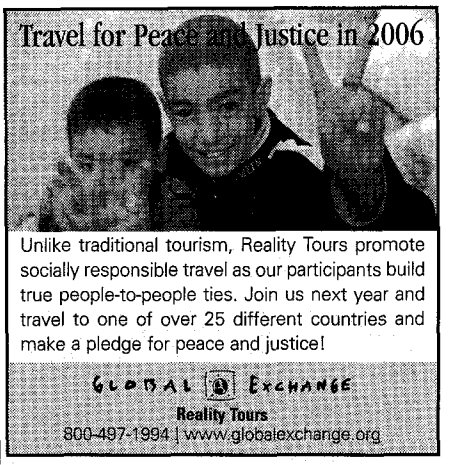
That principle infuses the narrative poem "An Immigrant Woman," a story of disaster framed by the witnessing account of a friendship inside the city, crossing boundaries of social and ethnic categories. The friendship is in some sense fostered by the challenges and ways of the city, then dissolved by them. The engulfing speed of life, the enormous systems of the city, reflect the even greater forces that make people mysteries to one another. The city accelerates fundamental intimacies and incomprehensions as it magnifies needs and alienations.

The language of scale, speed and variety Winters invents can display an amazing nerve as it undertakes to reflect those qualities in its material. She twists or revolves things to make them catch the light many ways, and she uses many kinds of word, clashing levels of speech. The last stanza of this book's opening poem, "The Mill-Race," reconsiders and amends the poem's central metaphor—rejects it, and then restores it! Here is the passage:

It's not a water-mill really, labor. It's
like the nocturnal
paper-mill pulverizing, crushing each
fiber of rag into atoms,
or the workhouse tread-mill, smooth-
lipped, that wore down a London of
doxies and sharps,
or the flour-mill, faërique, that raised
the cathedrals and wore out hosts of
dust-demons,
but it's mostly the miller's curse-gift,
forgotten of God yet still grinding,
the salt-
mill, that makes the sea, salt.

The big historical perspective, the range, the lists and the oddball vocabulary ("faërique" and "doxies" and "dust-demons"), like the long lines, will for many readers recall Walt Whitman. And the passage does openly and even vigorously contradict itself. But Winters, like most significant American poets, is in a dual tradition, of which Whitman represents only one half.

The Whitmanian vision radiates outward to include everything, but Winters also reflects the fiercely concentrated vi-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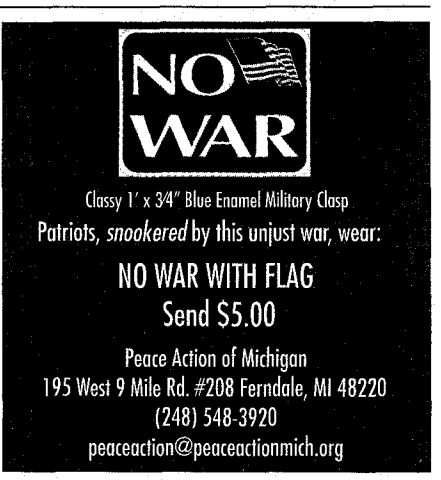
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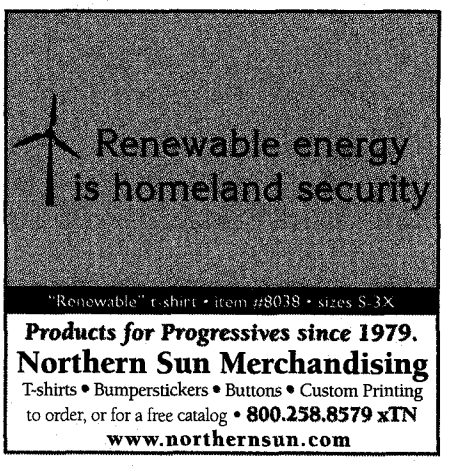
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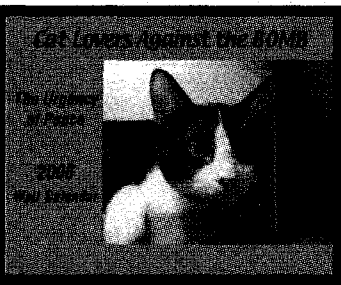

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sion of Emily Dickinson, the immensities compacted into fiery pinpoints. If the New World seems too savage or too brazen for the courtly art of poetry, those two parental figures seem to imply, then fine—unburdened of expectation the art will go further. Sometimes Dickinson seems to imply that never having seen a Moor or the Sea she will find a stranger, more extreme inner landscape. That acceptance of excess as a starting point, embarking on outrageous extremes of inclusion or concentration, has characterized a wide range of American poetries: an element in T.S. Eliot's audacious conglomerations, it could be argued, as well as the jazzy alertness of William Carlos Williams.

Excess, the idea of going further, for Winters has everything to do with the glamorous monster of New York, and often that means, as with Minetta Creek under the walks of Greenwich Village, going quite literally farther down: into not only the subterranean but even the prehistoric realities under Manhattan. Her sequence "A Sonnet Map of Manhattan" proceeds uptown from a poem set at Wall and Pine to Houston, through the Village and past First Avenue, continuing in a dozen unrhymed sonnets that speed through Midtown and past Winters's native Riverside Drive border of Harlem and the 168th Street Armory to end with the "elliptic, archaic smile" of a 10-year-old drug scout on 175th Street. In "Sixty-Seventh Street: *Tosca* With Man in Bedrock," it is the evening of the Met's first winter broadcast. The audience in the "cantilevered mezzanine, underlit,/stipple-eyed in its stoles and fur tippets, hangs/breathless." The daring play on "hangs"—the audience hangs in both the architectural and psychological senses, with the very word hanging at the end of the line—is a tribute to Puccini's "Vissi d'arte" aria, with its sense of great issues trembling at a verge. "I lived for art," sings Tosca, pleading for justice, for life to make sense, and the sonnet plunges past the roots of life itself:

> ...Straight down, past sallow platforms, sewer
> outfalls and steam lines, the man in the bedrock
> side-steps in his worklamp's flattened yellow,
>
> spools out more wire, lowers his radio probe
> to the back of a sunken centenary main
> (fed by watersheds in the still half-glacial Catskills)
>
> and hears, through bell curves of *pings*, each note
> vibrate off his shaft of Precambrian schist. Gray, void...
> our Manhattan Schist, laid down too early for fossils.

The brio of this passage is pleasing in itself—the informed, careful poetic medium of Winters showing itself more than adequate to the pace and the bizarre coherences of a technological world. Her intelligence penetrates and incorporates the material like a camera, but faster than computer-generated special effects, with more social nuance and more kinds of information. Tosca's question—why have I been repaid with pain for a life in art, *perche me ne rimuneri cosi?*—has the commercial, worldly implications of pay or remuneration. Winters's poem brings her own roving, inclusive, postindustrial awe to the mystery, looking downward for roots as Tosca looks heavenward.

The poet's way of thinking and the city's ways too are reflected in a live phrase like "sunken centenary main"—the two plain Old English words as if sent by the Department of Public Works to flank the contrasting, Latinate "centenary" as if it were a legal document, with the sounds of consonant and vowel conveying the girth and solidity of that thick, long-ago earth-swallowed water pipe. The water main, the radio probe, the worklamp—these manifest human arts too, and like the art of Tosca they are mortal causes for wonder.

Wonder may be the central emotion of this book, rather than the political feelings evoked by the title, which sounds so much like a quotation from Marx. (I am told it is not.) Political feelings the book has, abundantly, but as with Winters's earlier book *The Key to the City*, its spirit is closer to the tenement photographs of Jacob Riis than to the writing of Marx.

The final poem in the volume exemplifies that feeling of wonder, with an unpredictable source, demonstrating Winters's range of material and feeling. The poem, titled "The First Verse," meditates and associates and extrapolates from the first Hebrew words of Genesis. Here Winters's image for infinite complexity and mystery is not the subterranean but a surface of proliferating channels and branches. And wonder is not confined to solemn awe but can include comedy, the scholar's comedy of knowledge, the unsolvable knot that ties meanings to other meanings:

> ...The Bible in Hebrew—irreducible!
> Yet at the first verse, a hair-thin net of cracks
> appears, each crack a vast highway, and wildly we leap
> onto this first, this universal, cobble, *BRESHIT*. "In-the-beginning."

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Or maybe, "In-the-beginning-of." Of
what, you may ask—of "making"?
Maybe—
and so the slight break ramifies and
blooms
into shelf-feet of commentaries,
monographs, and now
you must swiftly ransack your
Sumerian—
yes, without Enuma Elish there's no
understanding the matter—

Within a few lines, she is saying in exasperated but amused wonderment, "But I forgot to mention/the Crimean War"—quite validly, since during that conflict:

...It seems the war upset the local
Karaites, who saddled up and fled
to St. Petersburg, taking their
cherished, oldest dated
scrolls of the Bible, wrapped for
freshness, in date leaves, and left them
in the public library. But naturally, the
public library!
And so these sectarians, not even
actually, exactly,
Jewish—the rabbis' deep-dyed foes—
preserved the inerrant Word,
though not without hosts of tiny scribal
errors
some day to set shuddering
whole forests of editors, compositors,
microfilmers—

There is an ebullient, entranced verve to this picture of the unknowable. Indeterminance has spurred Winters to learn ancient Hebrew, and to follow those hairline flaws as though they were a vital road map. In this regard, her work is the opposite of an opaque demonstration that language is inadequate. On the contrary, she learns languages to study the shapes and varieties of their inadequacies. Like the city, like the Bible, language in her poems is an alluring maze where the mind is propelled with the physicality of music, in consonant and vowel.

Vivid and reflective, documentary and visionary, re-imagining the city of New York with the same urgency that ponders the Hebrew of Genesis, this is a passionate, artful and re-readable book. It is also a strikingly contemporary book. For all its reaching back—into prehistoric geology, into Sumerian, or on a personal level into the time of actual cold-water flats in Greenwich Village—the book is also fascinated by the drive-in teller, the preteen drug scout, the construction tremors that weaken buildings on the Brooklyn littoral. Her sympathy with immigrants of small means who are displaced by the projects of Capital is humane but not sentimental; it is driven partly by the scholarly need to know the originating roots of everything—philological or economic. That avid curiosity inspires her inventions and keeps the pace of her work lively. With its extraordinary speed, scope and audacity, Anne Winters's poetry both expresses our time and resists it.

Essay by ROBERT PINSKY

MACDOUGAL STREET: OLD-LAW TENEMENTS

We're aware in every nerve end of our tenement's
hand-mortared Jersey brick, the plumbing's
dripping dew-points, the electric running Direct,
and on each landing four hall-johns fitted

to the specifics and minima of the 1879
Tenement Housing Act. We lived in its clauses
and parentheses, that drew up steep stairways
and filled the brown airwells with eyebrowed

windows. Unwhistling, the midwinter radiator
lists in its pool of rust. A lightcord winds
through its light chain; from a plasterless ceiling-slat

topples a roach, with its shadow. Downstairs, our Sicilian widow
beats the cold ribs with a long-handled skillet,
and faucets drum in twenty old-law flats.

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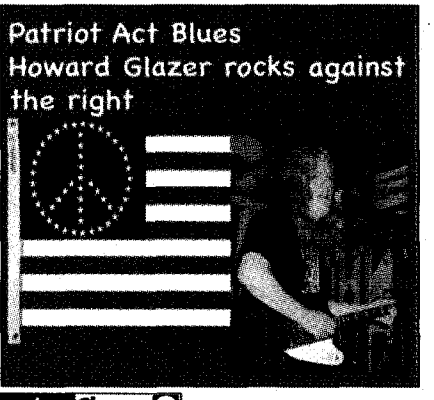
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The Displaced of Capital

"A shift in the structure of experience..."
As I pass down Broadway this misty late-winter morning,
the city is ever alluring, but thousands of miles to the south
the subsistence farms of chickens, yams and guava
are bought by transnationals, burst into miles
of export tobacco and coffee; and now it seems the farmer
has left behind his plowed-under village for an illegal
partitioned attic in the outer boroughs. Perhaps
he's the hand that emerged with your change
from behind the glossies at the corner kiosk;
the displaced of capital have come to the capital.

The displaced of capital have come to the capital,
but sunlight steams the lingerie-shop windows,
the coffee bar
has its door wedged open, and all I ask of the world
this morning is to pass down my avenue, find
a fresh-printed *Times* and an outside table;
and because I'm here in New York the paper tells me of here:
of the Nicaraguans, the shortage of journeyman-jobs,
the ethnic
streetcorner job-markets where men wait all day but more
likely the women
find work, in the new hotels or in the needle trades,
a shift in the structure of experience.

A shift in the structure of experience
told the farmer on his Andean plateau
"Your way of life is obsolescent."—But hasn't it always
been so?
I inquire as my column spills from page one
to MONEY&BUSINESS. But no, it says here the displaced
stream now to tarpaper *favelas*, planetary barracks
with steep rents for paperless migrants, so that they
remit less to those obsolescent, starving
relatives on the *altiplano*, pushed up to ever thinner air and soil;
unnoticed, the narrative has altered.

Unnoticed, the narrative has altered,
but though the city's thus indecipherably orchestrated
by the evil empire, down to the very molecules in my brain
as I think I'm thinking, can I escape morning happiness,
or not savor our fabled "texture" of foreign
and native poverties? (A boy tied into greengrocer's apron,
unplaceable accent, brings out my coffee.) But, *no*, it says here
the old country's "de-developing" due to its mountainous
debt to the First World—that's Broadway, my cafe
and my table, so how can I today
warm myself at the sad heartening narrative of immigration?
Unnoticed, the narrative has altered,
the displaced of capital have come to the capital.

East Fifth Street: A Poster for the *Oresteia*

Pasted bumpily on brick, life-sized. Inside,
in a former foundry's casting vault, my father in the role
of Agamemnon died. A thin-browed bronze mask skating
the bath-stair: "Know that in this House

an archaic anger worked: a child burnt down to soot-marks,
a king and king's son coursed down the years." He took
the subway home at two a.m. He told me "Anne, if you're empty
and show it, empty *inside*, you'll be invisible

to muggers..." I've found this true. The audience,
tiptoeing off through the streetlit litter,
sees across the street, in a blackened vitrine,

three hovering shapes. Rag-shrouded heads,
long-skirted army coats and boots; and beneath the rags,
the dewlaps and the smirched muzzles of the Furies.

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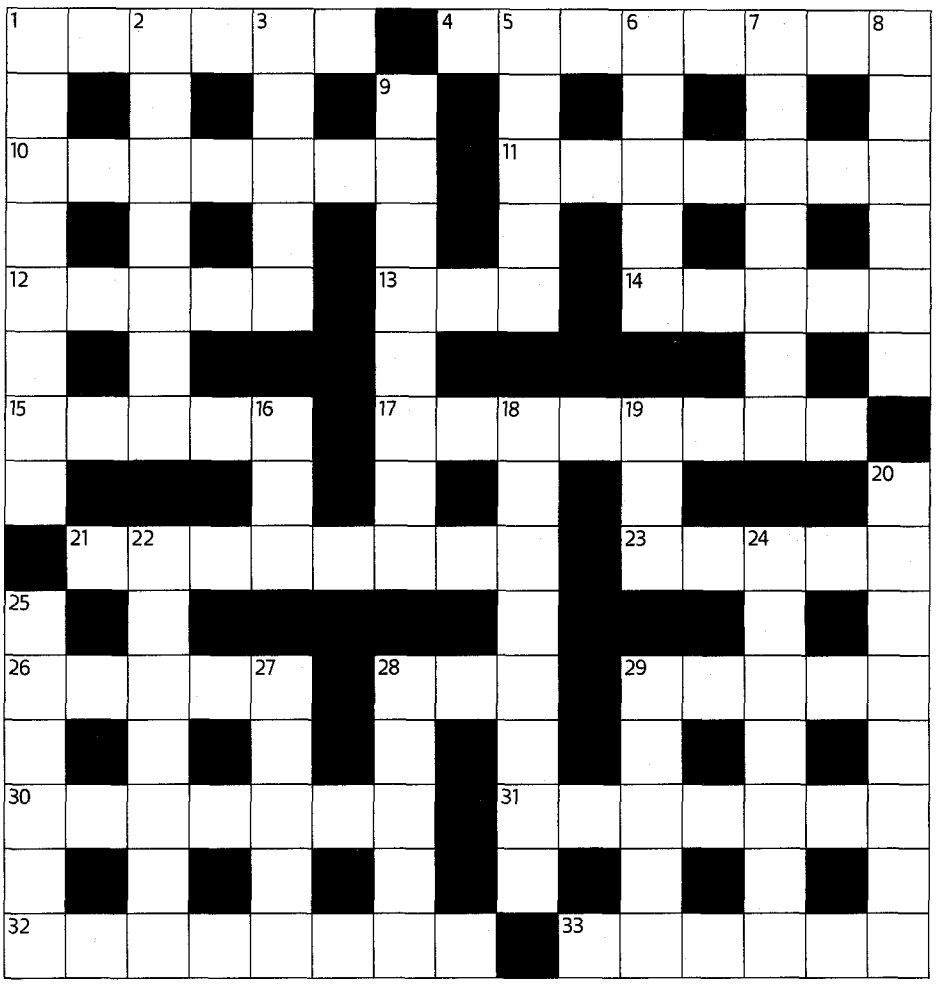
PUZZLE NO. 3016

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 and **4** Rather old, as they say, like the tiger associated with saberlike choppers. (4,2,3,5)

10 Proving you can be pretty good, if you're up to it! (7)

11 Operatic song with a lousy end to it, for one who got Theseus out of the labyrinth. (7)

12 Are they only taken after mornings at school? (5)

13 If you're in one, you're mad with such as Mary's lamb. (3)

14 The energy your computer has to have, but it's hard. (5)

15 A possessive majority of the IRA? (5)

17 Paired in plain paint, and emerging from it. (2,6)

21 Hogs the lime-light from someone, with Overland Express carriers heading north. (8)

23 Some say this is the thing yet to come in the back row, on a short street. (5)

26 and **29** Tennyson's hero and Methuselah's pappy going to the forest? (5,5)

28 See 33

29 See 26

30 Looks like the wrong Corps Ten carries a fixed water sign high up. (7)

31 The thumb is broken, and a metallic element is responsible. (7)

32 A broken-down horse and a man known as H.H. Munro meet at the site of a major catastrophe. (8)

33 and **28** across The middle portion may be small, but you might find it in the carpenter's tool box. (6,3)

DOWN

1 and **25** If you ask why someone did something, you may have to do this, as the exasperated person may demand. (6,2,6)

2 Ran up on a dirty informer heading east, just to tell a story. (7)

3 Looks like the little things sat up after ten. (5)

5 "The Bad Earth" seems to be at the center of things. (5)

6 From A to C, for example, might be a base. (5)

7 Describing religion as some want it given in air. (3-4)

8 What the dog did on command, and tipped over? (6)

9 and **28** A *Schnitzelbank* of the tutorial song? More like the place where Mary lost her head. (8,5)

16 The old sailor shows up as a turncoat. (3)

18 What one may have to do if the TV conks out, as the experimenter well knows. (4,4)

19 At present, this is what the winner did up. (3)

20 Afloat, but tied town on a chart, of sorts. (2,6)

22 Were Huey's supporters, just to drag things out? (7)

24 Concerning some question in your mind, this is a strong point. (7)

25 See 1 down

27 The ant had them high, trying to move the rubber tree plant. (5)

28 See 9

29 I will, you hear, but sometimes a couple marches down it to say "I do." (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3015

C	O	M	P	R	E	H	E	N	S	I	B	L	E	
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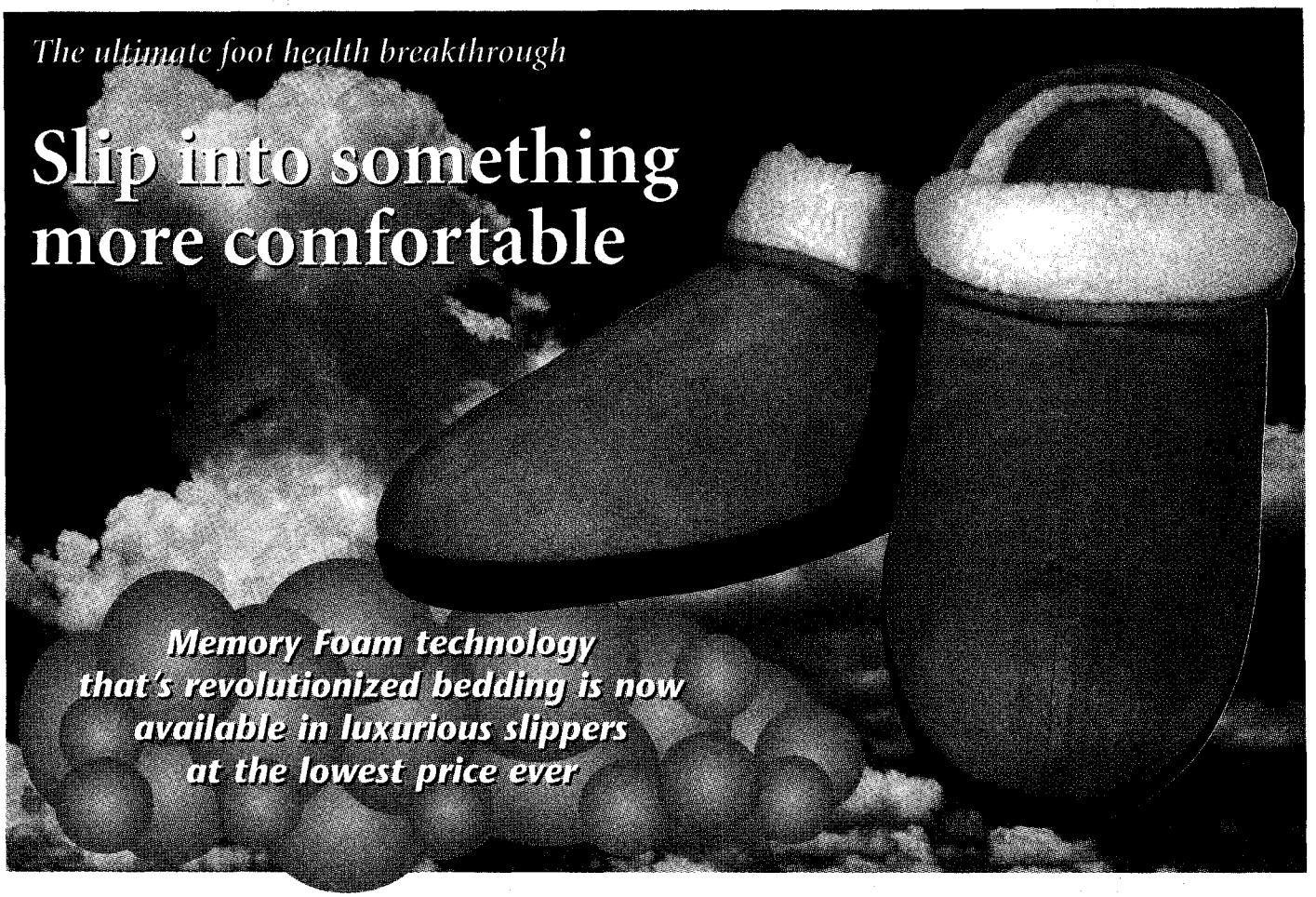

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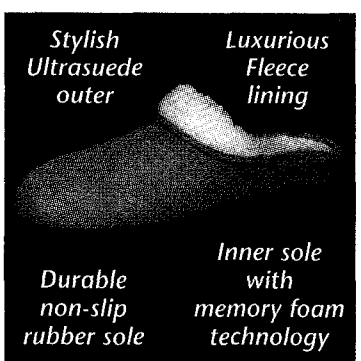
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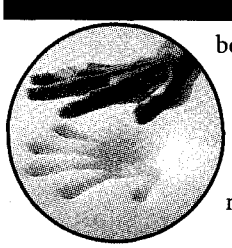

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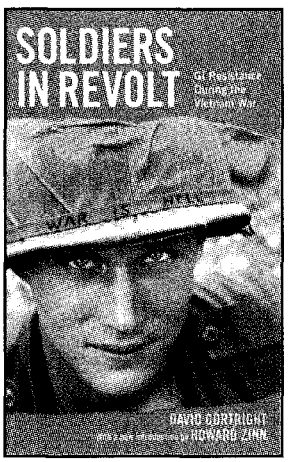

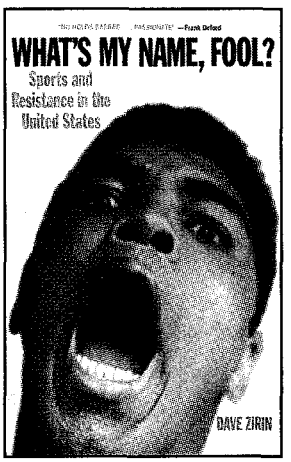

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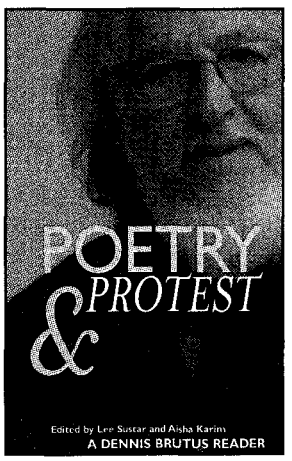

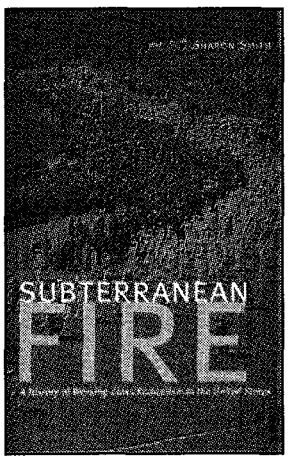

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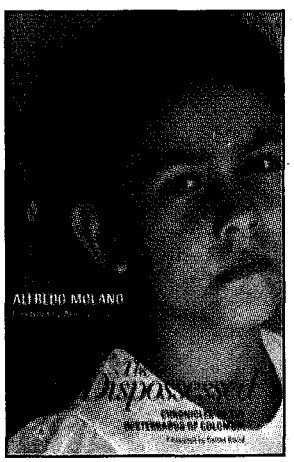

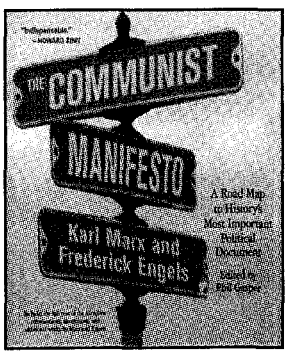

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